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# PRIESTS, PHILOSOPHERS AND PROPHETS

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## A DISSERTATION ON REVEALED RELIGION

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BY

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AUTHOR OF

"THE NEO-PLATONISTS" ETC.

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# PREFATORY NOTE

THE present work was finished provisionally early in July 1910, but insertions have been made later in Chapters VI., VII., and VIII. These are the result of suggestions by Dr. Sutherland Black, who very kindly pointed out to me some literature which had appeared after the book was written, or to which I had not given adequate attention. For these suggestions, which I think have enabled me considerably to improve the development of my positions, I wish to offer my best thanks. For the positions themselves I am responsible.

*May* 1911

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# CHAPTER I

## PRELIMINARY

Religions, like political constitutions, the world has been taught for a century, are not made, but grow. Contemporary politics seem to be teaching us in England that, without "that art which you say adds to nature," even the best of the constitutions that have grown cannot continue to adapt itself to present needs. And during the period of the authorised teaching of evolution as opposed to revolution there have been before men's eyes the examples of the American and French Republics to prove that conscious human art can build up a fairly stable political structure. Behind this, of course, there were ages of only partly conscious growth. As was said by Bruno and Shakespeare, it is Nature that ultimately makes Art. Yet the natural process, as it goes on, seems to bring with it the result that deliberate art must count for more and more. Even in the past we shall probably find that it has counted for more than the theorists of the nineteenth century were willing to admit. We shall not go back to simple acceptance of the view that great legislators, in primitive times, produced out of hand the codes ascribed to them; but we may

find that a view somewhat resembling this is nearer the truth than it has for a long time been fashionable to suppose.

Of religious origins the most characteristic recent studies have been anthropological. And anthropology is here taken in its specialised sense as that branch of the science of man that deals with the modes of savage thought and their survival in civilised life. Here the most generalised and philosophically important work has been done by Dr. Tylor ; but, as this did not touch very closely the specific features of the Christian creed, it seemed to younger investigators to call for a supplement. These, looking beneath imaginative myth and speculative cosmogony, which are now held to be outgrowths of religion rather than religion itself, have concentrated themselves on the study of the cults in which they find its essence as a practical thing. The works of Dr. J. G. Frazer in England, and of M. Salomon Reinach in France, may be taken as examples. They seem to mark the culmination of a general tendency, common, as it has been noticed that such tendencies are, to opponents and defenders of religious tradition in the same age. The religious revival or reaction, whichever we like to call it, of the nineteenth century was characterised by a return to the structure of specifically Christian dogma and ritual as distinguished from the pure theism and ethics also incorporated in the historic system. In the eighteenth century Deists and Apologists alike had treated as the

essential thing in Christianity the direction of the universe by a moral providence. What was over and above this, the Deists had argued, was useless or pernicious; while the Apologists defended it as a system of ceremonies perhaps arbitrary, but necessary, like legal regulations about things indifferent in themselves, for the institution of the Church as an actual society. With the return among the more timid of the educated classes to popular religion as a means of counteracting the revolution that was thought to be the outcome of rationalism, the mental attitude changed. Not ethical theism, not even belief to be tested by historical evidence, the spokesmen of anti-rationalism now declared, was essential Christianity. Apart from atoning sacrifice and sacramental cult, all the rest was idle. The new critical attitude of the anthropologists has been in part a reflex of this modification on the religious side. The scientific question was put, If this is essential Christianity, was there nothing like it before? The Deists had proved that ethical monotheism was not peculiar to the Judæo-Christian tradition. Are the mysteries any more peculiar? It appears that they are not. Those regarded as the most distinctive are transformations of world-wide savage or barbaric rites which once had a very barbaric meaning. Christianity as a cult is in its detail a growth from elements of savage ritual.

The orthodox are, of course, not without a rejoinder. Philosophically put, their argument

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is that the validity of a doctrine is not to be finally determined by an investigation of its origin. This, as a general proposition, is true. Strictly, no doubt, all our thinking, higher and lower, might be traced back to adumbrations in the minds of savages ; " like the man's thought dark in the infant's brain." Suspicion, indeed, may be thrown on some doctrines by their origin ; but ultimately the test must always be direct examination in the light of reason and experience. The historical investigation of origins, whatever its result, cannot discredit a doctrine for which positively valid grounds can be assigned. Yet, when no such grounds are assignable, and the direct attack of reason has failed, it may undermine the prescription that has so far repelled the assault.

This, however, as I have indicated, is not the line of thought that I now propose to follow out. In essence, the work of the anthropologists on religion seems to have reached its limits. No doubt there is endless detailed research to be done ; but in the meantime there is need to recall a distinction that has been partly forgotten ; and this leads to a new direction for our inquiries. After all, in spite of the detection of extremely primitive elements in all religions, some of these still have to be classed as lower and some as higher. How does this difference arise ? If by evolutionary growth, at what point precisely does a lower become a higher religion ? And is there all through nothing but continuous growth ?

Are there not perhaps definite stages where religions are made as well as grow? Has the arrival of humanity at self-consciousness no effect whatever in changing the process by which one embodiment of its ideals gives place to another?

To decide this question, it seems to me that a synoptic as distinguished from a specialist view is necessary. In trying to gain such a view, I believe that I have arrived at a general solution of the problem. This solution, I hold, can be proved true by what is accepted as the scientific method in these inquiries. To make the exposition as easy as possible to follow, I will first state briefly the general result. And, though the essential interest of the thesis is scientific, I do not propose to hold my metaphysical view or general presuppositions in reserve, but shall set these, as occasion may suggest, candidly before the reader.

For the purpose of the inquiry, religions may be classified into natural or spontaneous religions, looser or more organised, and "revealed religions." The latter are higher because they are religions carried to a more self-conscious stage. My contention is that all the revealed religions of the West were, from the first, constructed religions. They were constructed by means of a general idea that was the result of reflection when the growth of the organised natural religions had been completed from within. The ruling conception was ethical monotheism, or a monotheism tending to be ethical. The

process of construction, in Zoroastrianism and Judaism, was combination of the speculative idea with a pre-existing national cult by a priestly aristocracy. In Christianity there was a resurgence of cult and myth from a more popular level and from more cosmopolitan sources ; but still the construction was on the whole by groups imbued with hierarchical ambitions. In the case of Islam a single prophet, animated by the same monotheistic idea, selected elements from the Judæo-Christian tradition to form a relatively new system. As the internal divisions of Christianity came to a head, similar prophets appeared in Western Christendom ; who, however, have created what it is customary to call new sects or churches rather than new religions. To a certain extent, the same process has taken place among the successors of Mohammed.

Under this classification the religions of the remoter East cannot be precisely brought. Brahmanism and Buddhism, so far as they incorporate a cult, are at the stage of organised natural religions ; but beyond this they pass into philosophies. Philosophy, as we shall see, has played a very important part in relation to the religions of the West, but its part has been different. At an early stage it became an independent power. Since then it has now opposed and now entered into alliance with religion ; at one time lost its independence and at another regained it. From India eastward, that which corresponds to European philosophy has been an outgrowth of religious

life,[1] and has at the same time reacted on popular religion from its higher point of view because it has remained itself a part of religion. Thus, even Buddhism, though professedly going back to a personal founder, is a revealed religion only in a peculiar sense. What is distinctive of it is a philosophic mode of life, not a systematisation of rites. Yet the books that contain the philosophy are sacred books, parts of a canon. Their analogue in the West is the Bible or the Koran, rather than the works of Plato or Aristotle or Kant. On the other side, the Christianity of the New Testament is also a mode of life, distinguished by certain ethical characteristics more than by its peculiar rites, and having perceptible analogies with Buddhism. Thus we must not make our divisions too sharp.

In the West (under which in its broader sense I include both Europe and Western Asia) the beginnings of philosophy are much later than the organisation of natural religion, but a little earlier than the beginnings of revealed religion. Of the true view of their relations Hume seems to have had a glimpse in his dialogue "Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State."[2] He represents himself as setting forth to a friend his admiration of "the singular good fortune of philosophy, which, as it requires entire liberty

1 That Indian thought, to pass into philosophy distinctively so called, needed the contact with Greece that is known to have existed from the time of Alexander, is a thesis that does not yet seem to have been adequately examined. Professor Burnet is strongly inclined to it: see *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (1908), p. 21.

2 *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, sect. xi.

above all other privileges, and chiefly flourishes from the free opposition of sentiments and argumentation, received its first birth in an age and country of freedom and toleration, and was never cramped, even in its most extravagant principles, by any creeds, confessions, or penal statutes." "You admire," says my friend, "as the singular good fortune of philosophy, what seems to result from the natural course of things, and to be unavoidable in every age and nation. This pertinacious bigotry, of which you complain, as so fatal to philosophy, is really her offspring, who, after allying with superstition, separates himself entirely from the interest of his parent, and becomes her most inveterate enemy and persecutor. Speculative dogmas of religion, the present occasions of such furious dispute, could not possibly be conceived or admitted in the early ages of the world; when mankind, being wholly illiterate, formed an idea of religion more suitable to their weak apprehension, and composed their sacred tenets of such tales chiefly as were objects of traditional belief, more than of argument or disputation." The implication here is that philosophical theism, in which the revealed religions have found aid, was not only prior to them, but was in part their original source. The exclusiveness and intolerance of monotheism, finally organised in a creed, was itself derived from the philosophy against which it turned when it had grown to maturity. This suggestion Hume does not develop anywhere else; and, indeed, his

generalisation could not have been sustained consistently with the chronological data admitted in his age. What he was thinking of was probably the use which the Christian Fathers made of the principles of philosophical theism as stated by Greek and Roman writers, to defend the position of their own theology that the one God was the God of the Jews. But whence came the religion of the Jews itself? And how came it to be monotheistic? These questions Hume does not consider. And in the end it would not be strictly correct, though it approaches the truth, to say that Judæo-Christian monotheism arose directly out of the theism of the philosophers. A more accurate statement is that the theism of the philosophers and Judæo-Christian monotheism had a common source, and that the philosophic doctrine was slightly prior.

This general view, even in its modified form, I have to admit further, cannot be defended consistently with the positions still maintained in Biblical criticism by the majority of the "higher critics." I shall have to appeal, for its empirical support, to what is at present a small minority of scholars. This small minority, indeed, includes competent specialists; and I shall set forth the grounds for using my own judgment and adopting their view rather than simply relying on the consensus of experts. After all, it might be said, many trained Hebraists still follow the old tradition, refusing to accept the views of the "higher critics" at all. Does not their standing out show

at any rate this: that hitherto no compulsory scientific proof has been furnished such as that which has overborne all serious opposition to the Copernican astronomy, and even to the Darwinian biology? Thus, though I do not expect that the proofs I offer will be found compulsory, I think myself justified in treating the origin of Judaism as still a subject for hypothesis and argument.

The empirical results of the critical revision in Holland and in France, to which the appeal can be made as against the majority of German "higher critics" and their English followers, have been arrived at quite apart from the deductive synthesis by which the way now seems to me open for their completion. In fact, I had accepted them myself when only a partial deduction seemed possible. Thus the fuller deduction I have now to put forward will be a genuine verification in accordance with the "historical method" discovered by Comte and worked into his system of scientific proof by Mill. For the principle of the method is that in history empirical generalisation comes first; but since, in the extreme complexity of actual historical circumstances, merely empirical proof of a law must always be insufficient, this has to be supplemented by deduction from some general tendency in the human mind to follow the path that experience suggests has in the particular case been actually followed.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RISE OF MONOTHEISM

It is now known from contemporary documents, and not merely from late writers trained in Greek philosophy and desirous of finding the essentials of this in the Eastern religions, that before 1500 B.C. a generalised monotheism was already the possession of the Babylonian and Egyptian priesthoods. This, indeed, as Maspero tells us, was entirely an esoteric doctrine.[1] The vulgar simply accepted the polytheistic myths and did not go behind them. The Deity recognised in the esoteric theology as the one God was for the multitude of worshippers simply a celestial king ruling over the other gods. What particular divine name reached this supreme rank depended on political causes. At one time it might be the god of Memphis, at another time the god of Thebes, according as the seat of political sovereignty was tranferred to one city or the other. This division, however, between the few and the many marked the approaching end of

1 See *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient*, p. 334 (8th ed., 1909): "Ces idées élevées demeurèrent l'apanage d'un petit nombre de docteurs et de particuliers instruits: elles ne pénétrèrent pas la masse de la population." The reference here is to the celebrated Hymn to Ammon; but Maspero finds the same type of esoteric monotheism also in Chaldæa.

the old order; as is illustrated by the curious history, now becoming popularly known, of the heretical Pharaoh Khuenaten or Akhnaton (Amenophis IV.), who tried to supersede the worship of Ammon by the devotion to a deity represented by no visible image but the solar disc, and regarded as the one God. This was early in the fourteenth century B.C. Thus he was not the inventor of monotheism. The Ammon of the priests was already in their hymns celebrated by them as the supreme or sole God. What he desired was to overthrow the priestly monopoly by giving to the higher religion of the few a more popular and, as we should say, "laic" form. The king is here, as against the priestly caste, what Comte held that he normally is, the first leader of revolution. In this case, however, the priests won in the end. The old ceremonial was restored, with the offerings by which it was maintained; and not only did it continue after the destruction of the simpler worship initiated by the "heretic king," but it encroached more and more on civic life, so that henceforth the fate of Egypt was slow decay under its hierarchic petrifaction.

The decay, in so highly elaborate a structure, of course took a long time. A thousand years later the stability of the Egyptian order and the venerable character of its priesthood could still impress the greatest minds among the Greeks. And Chaldæa, conquered successively by the same foreign powers and similarly decaying, retained the same impressiveness. What then

at last became of the theological ideas evolved by the speculative minds among the priesthoods that had had so long the direction of civilisations upwards of five thousand years old ?

The later history of their science, which empirically they had carried to a considerable degree of complexity, we know. Data in geometry and astronomy, long accumulated by the priesthoods as masters of knowledge, began to be taken up by the Greeks from the seventh to the sixth century B.C., and afterwards formed the basis of a science more theoretically developed. Now my conjecture is that their generalised theology, in a detached form, similarly spread abroad among educated minds at the borders of the civilisations ; and that thus it became the original source at once of the philosophical theism of Greece and of the proselytising new religions of Zoroastrianism and Judaism. These two lines of development, so different in many ways, afterwards met, along with others, in Christianity.

For this conjecture the argument can only be deductive. On the one side, Orientalists have made the existence of a generalised Chaldæan and Egyptian monotheism certain. On the other side, the later religions and the philosophies are from given points of time historically known. The kind of proof that can be furnished of connexion as distinguished from mere succession is this : that we have a cause psychologically adequate to the effect ; and that the empirical facts, from their chronological relations, admit of

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explanation in this way. Now if Judaism is as late as is maintained by the new critical school, not only does the chronology present no difficulty, but the facts seem inexplicable except by such causal connexion.

The detailed argument will come later; but in the meantime it is evident that, on this view, we need not look for an independent origin of monotheism itself in Judæa, nor even in Greece. Its first origin, evidently, must have been an affair of slow growth, though its working out could only belong to self-conscious reflection. By what kind of process, then, did it arise, and what were its antecedents?

The answer, I hold, is partly furnished by Comte and partly by the anthropologists. Given an elaborately ordered polytheism, Comte's explanation of monotheism appears sufficient; namely, that the human mind, in its effort to understand, would naturally go forward to it by abstraction and generalisation. And the doctrine; I think it can be shown, would necessarily assume an ethical character. For the priests who speculated on the hierarchy of the gods were also the accumulators of scientific knowledge and the directors in chief of human life. Thus they had in their minds an anticipatory conception of the system of things as an ordered whole. Their science had shown them something of the regularity of laws in the cosmos; and, as the gods were always supposed to resemble man in possessing mind and will, they were conceived as acting

for ends. The God of the universe would therefore, on all analogies, be thought of as bringing into the world a moral order. We know, in fact, that he was conceived as a creative God, introducing form in the beginning; though his relation to the unformed material was at first left indeterminate. The Judæo-Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* was not defined till much later. Not only was the distinction between artificer and absolute creator still unformulated; there was also a certain indetermination in the conception itself of God. Through the imperfect discrimination between personal and impersonal agency, it floated between what we now call theism and pantheism. A tendency to personal theism was no doubt impressed originally by the centralisation of the State in a king. In imagination as distinguished from pure conception, the supreme God would therefore be figured as surrounded by a hierarchy of spirits corresponding to the popular gods.

But how was the basis formed of this high theology? For, of course, an elaborate polytheism like that of Egypt and Chaldæa is itself far from primitive. Here the general explanation is furnished by the animistic theory of Tylor and Herbert Spencer. The material of religion, though not religion itself, is to be found in the belief in ghosts; and this arose out of a primitive speculation of man to explain his inner life, with its alternations of consciousness and unconsciousness. The ghost-soul was the permanent

being within, regarded as separable and as existing in picturable form. And all the features of the theory resulted from observed facts, mixed with imagination, as, indeed, all observed facts are. The soul was supposed to be picturable because men had dreams in which they saw other persons, who were sometimes living and sometimes dead. It was conceived as separable to explain sleep, trances, and death; for how can one understand why the body is now active and now quiescent unless there is some difference in the two cases? If it was capable of going away and returning, there was a possibility of explanation. The soul came to be thought of as permanent, perhaps because if it could exist at all in a separable form there seemed no reason why it should cease to exist. Of course there were many variants in the belief. In some races, as among the Egyptians, it became extremely intensified. In others, as the Homeric Greeks and the Jews of the pre-apocalyptic age, it faded almost to nothing. And to the formation of the theory of course many more elements contributed than those that I have mentioned.

Not until animism has appeared is the way prepared for a definite religion. Whatever vague awe there may be apart from or prior to belief in souls, this seems to me necessary to give the determinateness required for the conception of a god. According to Spencer, the basis of religion is ultimately ancestor-worship. Great gods arise from the time when a ghost supposed more power-

ful than the rest, especially the ghost of a long-remembered king, stands out from the other ancestors. Cosmic powers, as, for example, the heavenly bodies, only become deified through misunderstanding of names. Particular persons, who may have had the names attached as epithets, after their deification are imagined to have been identical with the heavenly bodies themselves. Dr. Tylor has never found this view satisfactory; but, working on the same data of savage belief, has suggested rather that, when the idea of a soul has once been formed, cosmic powers can be directly regarded as living beings, through the application of the animistic hypothesis to all organic and even inorganic nature as a universal principle of explanation. This form of the doctrine I accept rather than the Spencerian, because students of mythology seem to find no actual cases of deified men becoming great gods. Ancestor-worship, they find, remains always a subordinate cult. Nor is a deified king raised as an individual person to the rank of a high divinity. If he is more than the object of a minor cult, he is worshipped as the incarnation of some pre-existing divine power.

The anthropological theory of animism, which has been worked out as a hypothesis to explain the beliefs of savages as these have been generalised after inquiry into their details, is confirmed by what are called survivals in the historic civilisations. With the animistic faith of early man there goes a belief in "magical" action by

sympathy passing from one animated thing to another. Various methods of communicating this sympathy for practical ends are devised, and become a complicated tradition. And the whole structure of belief and practice that thus comes into being goes on through the distinctively religious stage. Men as a rule do not cease to believe in souls when they have begun to believe in gods. And even after a considerable growth of science, which means the uniformity of impersonal law, magical practices still prevail. Thus in ancient civilisations like those of Egypt and Babylonia there is formed an enormously complex structure not only of life, but of belief. Animism, magic, polytheism, science, with a monotheistic theology finally emerging, all co-exist at different social and intellectual levels, or it may be even in the same mind. And the polytheism itself, which gives its historic label to the system, is extremely varied. There are gods of different ranks. Some are conceived as beneficent and some as maleficent. Some gods are cosmic, as the stellar and planetary divinities, the worship of whom is associated with astrology and thence with the beginnings of astronomical science. Others have human, and others animal forms, or at least are associated with species of animals as their sacred "totems." Some live in everlasting joy and dominion, while some have to become servants on earth, and may die and come to life again. Sacrifices are offered, at an early stage probably as gifts to please the gods, after-

wards as propitiations for guilt incurred by neglect of them. At a more primitive level than the sacrificial gift is the sacramental meal, in which the flesh of the incarnate god (animal or human) is partaken of by his worshippers so that his divinity may be appropriated. As the monarchical government of the invisible world, following the progress of government on earth, becomes stronger, the beneficent gods tend to pass into a host of "angels," or messengers and heavenly servants and warriors of the supreme God; while the maleficent gods become what we call "demons," who afterwards form a host under a chief and in a dwelling-place of their own. And of course there is an increasing complication of rites and ceremonies, and especially of "taboos" or prohibitions of action, at first imposed for no reason except some vaguely felt danger. So important are these last that M. Salomon Reinach places in taboo the essence of practical religion. In any case, its possibilities for the formation of a priestly code of ethics are obvious. And where morality grows up under the dominance of an organised religion it tends to become itself a part of the religion. According to the stage of its evolution, it may have any degree of externality or of "inwardness." In the civilisations of which I am now speaking, along with advanced legal codes, there was inward morality that had reached a very high level.

This general description may easily be confirmed by consulting the recognised authorities. It was

necessary to indicate the pyramidal character of the structure to avoid too great abstractness in conceiving the monotheism finally reached. This, as has been said, was only the possession of a few. In practice it had displaced nothing else. Clearly, if it ever got loose, it would not remain simple long, but would be sure to undergo complications in the surrounding world. And, while the elaborate structures within which it first appeared had felt no shock, it would hardly make way at all outside the system of which it was still part.

## CHAPTER III

### GREECE AND PHILOSOPHICAL THEISM

For the emergence of pure monotheism as a force in the world the way was prepared by the fall of the ancient empires. The Egyptian and Babylonian civilisations had arisen in what were at first national States, not empires in the distinctive sense. Conquest and organisation produced a high degree of complexity, fixing the results of past internal growth, but incompatible henceforth with anything but increasing conservatism bound to end in decay. Assyria, the most aggressive and the most ruthless of all conquering States, was a kind of robber-organisation with its seat at Nineveh, making war in the name of its tribal god Asshur. For the civilisation it had, it depended on what had been achieved in Babylonia, for a time subjected to its kings. It was destroyed near the end of the seventh century by a combination of the neighbouring peoples. The great empires that remained were those of revived Babylonia and of Egypt; but in the latter part of the sixth century these succumbed in turn to the Achæmenid monarchy of Persia, which superimposed itself on both of them. From this period a new empire and new peoples

come on the scene. The Aryan as distinguished from the Semitic-speaking branches of the white race assume the predominance. In Europe and on the coast of Asia Minor the Greeks, who in so far as they were Aryans were a kindred people, had long been a power ; and at this time they had definitely reached the form of polity by which they are distinguished historically—that of the republican city-State. In Asia the Persian kings began to build up an empire of a new type ; which did not, like those of Assyria and Babylonia, try to efface the nationalities of its alien subjects, but granted them practical autonomy within its own military and tribute-collecting organisation. Its attempt to bring the Greeks under its suzerainty failed, as it is scarcely necessary to recall, at Salamis and Platæa (480 and 479 B.C.). The republican polity was to have sufficient time to develop and hand down its ideals before it was brought under the form of a later empire-State. And this return to the imperial type of organisation, under the Macedonians first and afterwards the Romans, did not come about before the conquerors were in culture Hellenic. This, however, is not our topic at the present stage. We have now to consider what was going on intellectually between the fall of Nineveh (608 B.C.) and the defeat of Persia, the ambitions of which had henceforth to be limited to Asia and Egypt, till it was in its turn overthrown.

The religion of the Persians will be best considered at a later stage, when we come to deal

with that of the Jews, which grew up under their empire. It is doubtful whether their distinctive religion, with its dualism and its claim to go back to a personal founder, is as old as the Greek theistic philosophy; and Judaism, as all independent critics admit so far as its developed form is concerned, is decidedly younger. The thing that happened I hold to be this: that the esoteric monotheism of Egyptian and Chaldæan priests, during the contacts and collisions of peoples in this transition-time of more than a century, was seized upon by detached and prepared minds at the borders of the civilisations; and that in particular it had both a rapid and a permanent effect on the Greek educated class. But we must first try to make clear to ourselves at what precise point of spiritual development the Greeks were. This involves going back some distance in order to gain a conspectus of circumstances that seem at first out of relation to the development of theology. The discussion of them, however, is necessary if the chronological relations of the new factor are to be made quite definite, as I think they can be.

All the great civilisations have behind them a considerable period not recorded in historical documents. Thus Egyptologists and Assyriologists assign to about 8000 B.C. the beginnings of the civilisations which they can trace by documentary evidence for five thousand years of this time.[1]

[1] These figures are only given as approximations. I know that final results have not been reached; but high authorities can be cited for them.

The historical Greek civilisation is traceable by definite dates only from the seventh century downward; but archæological evidence has in recent years brought to light the "Mycenæan" civilisation which preceded it; and this, it is now known, was at its height from about 2000 to 1500 B.C. After this it fell before Northern invaders, to give place to the transition period called "the Greek Middle Age," out of which sprang the historic Greece known to us from literature. The Mycenæan civilisation as revealed by its art had a certain relative æsthetic freedom; but on the whole it was probably not very strongly distinguished from the less determinate of the Oriental civilisations contemporary with it. That is to say, it was monarchical, imperialist, and based on a polytheistic religion, but without the elaborately organised hierarchy of Babylonia and Egypt. Features of its life are preserved in the Homeric poems, either by deliberate archaism or because some of them, such as the use of war-chariots and bronze weapons, were still existent in that portion of the "Middle Age" from which the poems date.

The controversy regarding the authorship of the poems, which began over a century ago, is not yet decided. It seems reasonable to suppose that long epics like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* could not be projected till after a preparatory period in which many poets had composed short epic lays. From the poems themselves we know that the final author or redactor worked with

formulæ and similes that had become common property, and could be made to do duty in various contexts. We know also, however, that at a much later stage of self-conscious art Virgil could simply transfer to his own epic whole lines translated from Homer. Much later, again, Milton, at the same level of self-conscious art, could deal similarly with lines and phrases of his predecessors, from Homer to Virgil and the moderns. Thus Homer—if we assume his personality—was only working, in a somewhat "rougher" way, as it has been put, according to the method of the historically known epic poets. The "stratification" of customs belonging to different ages, if it really exists, does not, on this view, seem to prove much against the unity of authorship. The poet, of course, did not invent the whole matter of the epics out of his own head. He took it from stories preserved in the pre-existing lays. Thus the stratification may well be due to preservation of archaic features in the various narratives handed down with the conservatism natural to popular tradition. The expurgation which Professor Gilbert Murray finds to have gone on, as in the reduction of the human sacrifice offered by Achilles at the funeral of Patroclus to the barest possible statement of a traditional detail that could not be wholly omitted, seems best explicable on the view that the poems represent the mind of an individual poet; for I think no one maintains that there was a priestly corporation to do this

work.[1] Out of the various views presented I am therefore most inclined to accept in general terms that which is stated by another high classical authority, Professor J. B. Bury, who holds that the "great editor" of the *Iliad*, from whom it received approximately its present form in the ninth century B.C., was at the same time the great poet. With decided stress on the last clause, this amounts to acceptance of personal authorship. The *Odyssey*, though bearing on the whole the mark of the same period, that is, of the "Middle Age," post-Mycenæan but prehistorical, differs somewhat in vocabulary and in manners. But is not this easily explicable, on the hypothesis that both poems proceed from the same poet, by his necessary use of a different cycle of lays for the second poem? I have not the philological and archæological knowledge to justify an independent contribution to the discussion like that of Mr. Andrew Lang; but I must confess that I can see no greater difference in tone and colour between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* than between *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Ancient tradition—which, it is necessary to bear in mind, had no pious ends to serve, but was quite disinterested if insufficiently informed—assigned the two poems to the same author; and in this view I could be content to acquiesce with M. Havet, who defended the personal

[1] Shakespeare in *King John* deals similarly with the raiding of the monasteries, dramatised in detail, with an appeal to the passions of the time, by his predecessor who wrote *The Troublesome Reign of King John*.

authorship and the unity of Homer in a Latin thesis[1] before he became a pioneer in the radical criticism of the Hebrew Scriptures to which we shall come later.

Be this as it may, the *Iliad* is broadly assignable to the ninth century B.C., to which Herodotus, writing in the fifth century, had already assigned the poet of both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. And I suppose no one will now contest the statement, quoted from Wolf's "Prolegomena" in the new Oxford edition of the *Iliad*, that the text of Homer is established on far surer philological foundations than the Massoretic text of the Hebrew Bible. In age Homer is exceeded by no living sacred books. The oldest parts of the Vedas are not authentically assignable to a higher date. Thus it may be said that nothing older will ever be read again as literature. The antiquity of the extant beginning of Greek letters is exceeded only by the dead scripts of Egypt and Western Asia, brought to light by archæological research within the last century. European civilisation, therefore, is as old as any extant civilisation, with the possible exception of the Chinese.[2] India seems older because its life has had greater continuity, presenting no such break as the Christian Middle Age of Europe; and because it has preserved an older social type, though with modifi-

[1] *De Homericorum Poematum Origine et Unitate*, 1843.

[2] The great antiquity of the Mediterranean civilisation in which that of Greece and consequently of Europe had its beginning has been still more decisively established by the results of recent excavations in Crete.

cations. But to the historic civilisation of India, as to us, Egypt and Babylonia are a true elder world.

In Homer the Greek genius is already fully articulate, and has reached the stage of moral reflectiveness. Heroes are discriminated for honour as "looking before and after." The poems, although they contain religious elements, are fundamentally not religious poems, but objective representations of life. In the life they represent we can vaguely discern the political elements out of which emerged the free States of Greece and of modern Europe. There is a kind of "constitutional monarchy," an aristocracy of nobles or minor kings, and the dim outline of something that will afterwards be democracy. The diviner or prophet is a known figure, but the priestly class is as inconspicuous as in the life of historic Greece. The germ of the future can be seen especially in the free play of impersonal criticism round men and gods alike. The religion is an "anthropomorphic polytheism," which Hegel and Comte agree in regarding as a more advanced stage of religious evolution than the "astrolatry" of the Chaldæans. It cannot be said, however, that the tendency is distinctively to the evolution of a higher theology. Zeus holds a position of celestial kingship, limited by the wills and persuasive powers of the gods and goddesses, and by some impersonally conceived fate behind; but the direction taken by the advance in reflectiveness is essentially humanistic criticism. As a

single hero can stand out against the imperial sovereignty of Agamemnon, so the other gods can complain of and sometimes thwart the action of Zeus ; and the case of all is presented in an impartial light under which ethical judgment is easily applied. The gods, it has often been noted, are less moral in action than the human personages ; and, while this is in itself merely an instance of the archaism or conservatism of religion, there is not with the Greek poet the awe that has elsewhere stood in the way of any exercise of human judgment regarding a divine power. There are, indeed, passages in which the relations of the gods among one another are treated with light ridicule.

Of course this is only one side. A distinct tendency not to flout but quietly to get rid of the "survivals" of archaic savagery can also be traced. And in Hesiod and the gnomic and lyric poets who followed before and during the definitely historical period similar drifts of thought continue. Hesiod, though later, preserves more archaic material than Homer, especially in the form of cosmogonic myths, but he too displays a sceptical reflectiveness. All along there is free play of criticism, destructive or reconstructive ; and there is no organised social authority to check the poets. It is rather they that have the censorship over public opinion. There is no overshadowing caste, as in mediæval Christendom, that can tolerate extreme licence provided it is only that, but cannot tolerate serious criticism by those who claim in virtue of individual insight

to correct the common doctrine, as the Greek poets did.

On the borders of the historic period, when prose begins to be written, appear new classes of critics. First we meet with the "wise men," who framed such maxims as those that have been preserved at the beginning of the compilations called Lives of the Philosophers, and so forth. After these appear the philosophers properly so called, who not only reflect in general terms on human life, but proceed to investigate the nature of the world. This kind of investigation, carried on in complete independence, was definitely a new thing. The Egyptians and Babylonians had created the beginnings of science, and had arrived at a high theology. Philosophy was the distinctive creation of the Greeks. No doubt there are conceptions in the Babylonian and Egyptian cosmogonies which, disentangled from myth and viewed in the light of later ideas, can be called philosophic ; but there was not individual reflection with a clear view of the problem to be attacked. The quasi-philosophical ideas arrived at do not seem to be beyond the scope of Hesiod's *Theogony*. Even the high theology of the priests, though it had reached the stage of pure monotheism, was not yet philosophical theism. Its attitude was always that of "common sense," which might become very refined, but still did not amount to philosophy. The nature of a god was thought to be sufficiently known. He was conceived as a powerful invisible being acting

on the world of men, animals, and things. There was a kind of "dualistic" opposition between gross matter and "spirit," or finer matter with the power of intelligent will and of swifter motion. When a supreme, and finally a sole, God was conceived, he was, in our phrase, "spiritualised." That is to say, he was thought of as without visible form, as potentially at least omnipresent, as knowing all things, and as having the power to carry into effect instantly every volition; but the ultimate nature either of God or gods or of the world was not examined. It was not even asked at first whether these natures were the same in essence or different. This examination was begun by the Ionian Greeks on the coast of Asia Minor, and they examined first the nature of the world. The earliest Greek philosophers may be called, if the phrase is understood without its aggressive sense, atheological. In using the name of "god," as they did sometimes, they transferred it to the world or its parts.

The first school of Greek philosophy was that which had the centre of its activity at Miletus. The names of its successive chiefs are Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes. That this was really a school, and not merely a succession of isolated thinkers, Professor Burnet has shown in his *Early Greek Philosophy*. As philosophy was very closely connected with the science then known, and, indeed, differed from science only by its breadth of view, the school of Miletus was at the same time a school for scientific investiga-

tion. Various particular inventions and discoveries are ascribed to its chiefs. What, then, was the influence in Greece of this science under philosophic direction? According to Professor Burnet, its influence was really immense; and it is especially important to note this because his tendency is the very opposite of exaggeration. Indeed, it is safe to say, in view of his method, that the thinkers must have had more in their minds than he finds it possible definitely to ascribe to them. In his account their doctrines seem to be reduced to the barest meaning that the carefully sifted fragments or statements of their opinions, cleared of the comments of the ancient "doxographers," will admit of. In one case (though not till we get beyond the earliest "physicists") I shall try to show that less is allowed than is required to explain the expressions.

The philosophers of Miletus flourished during the sixth century B.C., Thales and Anaximander having been born in the seventh century. While science was thus for the first time cultivated with a philosophic aim, the religious movement known as Orphism was passing over Greece. This was not specially connected with the monotheistic doctrine to which I ascribe an important influence on the Greek philosophical theism. If monotheism came in as an element, Orphism was in essence rather a doctrine of expiatory ritual, going back to archaic and popular ideas. It was an attempt at a "revealed religion," whose

revealer, Orpheus, as Aristotle declared in the fourth century, had never existed. It was popular in its preoccupation with the fate of the soul in the underworld ; the soul's way of release having been shown by a god who descended into Hades. Here it differed from the Olympian religion, represented in a purified form in Homer, as Christianity differed from prophetic Judaism. Thus it seems to have been precisely the religion which, if adopted, might have consolidated the existing priesthood and given it the social direction. For the social type of Greece was still sufficiently indeterminate, and the priesthood of the temples had no dogma already formed that could give a bias against it. To explain its failure several causes have been assigned ; but Professor Burnet seems to have stated the decisive one.

When comparisons are drawn between Greece and the Oriental civilisations, all monarchical and theocratic in form, it is noticed that in Greece a military aristocracy, having obtained the social leadership, prevented the rise to power of a priestly caste. And of course the armed democracies of the cities were an extension of the aristocracies. Political privileges were by degrees wrested from the ruling class, while the directing power of the State remained laic as before. But India similarly had a military aristocracy which was so far successful in its struggle for power that the kings arose out of it. Professor Rhys Davids has shown that in the period of the rise of Buddhism (precisely in the sixth century B.C.)



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the type of government was not even fixedly monarchical, but that along with incipient monarchies there were also republics. And, to take a remote parallel, in the Italy of the Middle Ages the city-republics, whether of aristocratic or democratic constitution, could not seriously conceive the idea of emancipating themselves from the spiritual supremacy of the Church. Of course this was a case of an established system long fixed; and Greece was still plastic. But why did not Greece take this path in the sixth century B.C., instead of some centuries later when overwhelmed along with the rest of the ancient world? The cause is clearly stated in the passage I have just referred to:[1] "It looked as if Greek religion were about to enter on the same stage as that already reached by the religions of the East; and, but for the rise of science, it is hard to see what could have checked this tendency. It is usual to say that the Greeks were saved from a religion of the Oriental type by their having no priesthood; but this is to mistake the effect for the cause. Priesthoods do not make dogmas, though they preserve them once they are made; and in the earlier stages of their development the Oriental peoples had no priesthoods either in the sense intended. It was not so much the absence of a priesthood as the existence of the scientific schools that saved Greece."

Concurring circumstances, of course, were necessary. Historians have conjectured that if the

[1] *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd ed., p. 87.

Persian invasion had never come, or if it had succeeded, the schools of Ionia would have been powerless to check the movement. In the first case there would have been peaceful permeation by mystagogues from the East in alliance with Orphic adepts ; in the second case, the Persian hegemony, working in alliance with the local religions, would have provided the new cult with the conditions for organising itself. What secured the liberty of science and philosophy was the direction given to national enthusiasm by patriotic resistance to the Asiatic kings. The Greeks were really fighting, not for their own gods against the destroyers of their shrines, as, by a natural illusion, they thought, but against the gods and religion raised to an independent power dominating the State.[1] Yet, when everything has been allowed for political accident, I think we must also recognise in the end what amounts to an innate disposition of the Greek mind. As in the case of individuals, the manifestation of this aptitude was not wholly independent of fortune ; but that Greece had also something positive tending to freedom seems to be shown first by the humanism of its literature and then by the naturalism of its scientific philosophy. I am glad to find support for this view in the passage quoted from Professor Burnet.

Whether we explain the result by intrinsic or by extrinsic causes, the victories of Athens at Marathon and Salamis were decisive in the history

[1] *Cf.* Ed. Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, iii. § 256.

of the human race.[1] Students of the disinterred Oriental civilisations are quite right in pointing out, as Maspero does, that the contest was not precisely between civilisation and barbarism, but between two types of civilised life; yet it remains true that the victorious cause in this case was the higher. And when we consider what kind of organisation was imposed on Europe later, and with what extreme difficulty it was shaken off, even with all the spirit of the Northern nations for resisting power, and with the recovery of Greek literature and thought and the new growth of science for encouragement to civic and intellectual freedom, it seems clear that, without the example of Greece, the theocratical and monarchical order would never have been transcended on earth. The fanciful speculation might be started that if a smaller and older planet is indeed inhabited by intelligent beings, it has probably reached its term in political unification under some perfected benevolent despotism of Chaldæan type, without entering at all on what Comte calls "the revolutionary transition of three thousand years," beginning with Homer and not yet ended.

This is not to say that the first movement of Greek thought after it became conscious of its freedom attained by immediate intuition to absolute truth, and that it had now nothing further to learn from what had preceded it. On

[1] νῦν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀγών.
Æsch. *Pers.* 405.

the contrary, a movement of return very soon became necessary. What had been gained was that ideas which elsewhere, if they were to count at all, could only become elements in other religions, in Greece were taken up into the higher form of a philosophy.

When Greek systematic reflection, starting free from the practical organising aims to which intellect had been bound down in Western Asia, set out on its quest of pure truth, it first sought the explanation of all things in a reality given as objective. The substance which the early thinkers regarded as primary was something known by vaguer or clearer perception. It was constant in quantity. Other apparent substances were transformations of it, and returned into it. Particular things were differentiations of it, and the life and sense and intelligence of men and animals were temporary determinations of qualities latent in the whole. Clearly this is a philosophical view. It aims at a unity of principle not contained in the common-sense view of the world; which at first supposes particular things to come into and go out of existence, and recognises irreducible differences. And, indeed, in the schools it came to be expressly set in antagonism to the opinion of "the Greeks" in general—that is, of the popular mind.

Its fundamental axiom or postulate, *ex nihilo nihil*, remains that of modern science; but as a philosophy the early movement reached no permanently acceptable solution. Divergent paths were

taken, and led to conclusions differing in detail and equally unverifiable. And the next movement of thought, partly by developing the early thinkers to extremes, and partly by an investigation of the conditions of knowing, showed that the apparently real existences presented in perception are only phenomena for the knower, and enable us to arrive at no system of permanent realities. For this we must fall back on something else.

This was, for the men of constructive genius who now appeared, "God and the soul"; or, more exactly, in terms of philosophic thought, something symbolised by those names. As the first movement had tried to unify the nature of things from acceptance of the perceived object as real, and had so far failed, the new movement, when it became positive, turned to the other side of that "dualism" which had been in human thought since it was human. The problem that early man had tried to solve by conceiving a world of ghosts and gods behind presented phenomena was found to be still existent; and, in the meantime, the conception had been considerably purified and rationalised, though, as has been said, without becoming strictly philosophical. Now, if the view that I have put forth is right, the idea that God is one was thrown into Greek thought from outside, and not wholly developed from within; though a portion of the philosophers immediately made it their own. As presented to them, it was more like what we call distinctively theism. As

they developed it, especially at the first stage, it became more like pantheism. And again, at the last stage of Greek thought, it tended anew to a pantheistic form.

That the idea of divine unity was not developed from within Greek religion seems to be shown by the literature which we possess; for no real process is traceable from the monarchy of Zeus to the conception of a sole God. Humanistic criticism plays round the Olympian hierarchy without even trying to reduce it to anything but a poetic order for the imagination. When Zeus is identified with the one God, this is abrupt, and, as I shall try to show, is best explained by an external contact. The contact I take to be no more than this: that an internationalised monotheism, packed into formulæ which, I think it must be admitted, could be made more portable than those of the mathematics and astronomy which the Greeks admittedly borrowed, had spread abroad, as a doctrine of "wise men," among the educated and reflective classes both of the Greek and other races. Even before it came to the Greeks it was the doctrine of a God no longer national. The one God was neither Ammon nor Merodach, though he might be called locally by those names. And this, as we shall see, was also the position of the greatest minds among the Greeks when they applied the name of Zeus to the highest or sole God.

These, in the early part of the fifth century B.C., were Heraclitus and Æschylus; but Xenophanes

is earlier, and philosophic theism is often ascribed to him as its beginner. Against this Professor Burnet has proved, in the first place, that Aristotle, in what he says in the *Metaphysics*, does not ascribe to him originality in his doctrine of "the One";[1] and in the second place that the doctrine is really pantheism. These proofs I accept; but I maintain that it was a pantheism incorporating theism, and not simply a reproduction of the doctrine as to the one nature of things held by the early Ionians. Further, it seems to me that the theism is explicable as a doctrine with which Xenophanes had become acquainted in his wanderings in search of knowledge; and we know of these by his own statements. This agrees in substance with Professor Burnet's view as to his kind of activity; and it helps to explain the well-known depreciating judgment of Heraclitus: "The learning of many things teacheth not understanding, else would it have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and again Xenophanes and Hekataios."[2] Like Pythagoras, Xenophanes had important ideas, to which he was able to give a personal impress; and these, as in the case of Pythagoras, were both theological and scientific. The suggestions attributed to him in geology are as good as anything for more than two thousand years after.[3] Yet Heraclitus—a per-

[1] By πρῶτος τούτων ἑνίσας, as he shows (*Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd ed. p. 139 *n.*), Aristotle could only mean "the first partisan of the One," and not "the first to unify."

[2] I cite the fragments as translated by Burnet.

[3] Burnet, however, thinks they were borrowed from Anaximander.

fectly self-conscious man of genius—was right in placing the others below himself in thought; for he had attained an original and unified philosophical doctrine concerning the nature of things, and they had not. Simply as a theologian, Heraclitus agreed with Xenophanes, but there is no sign of borrowing from the elder thinker. All is explicable if we suppose that pure monotheism was then a common doctrine, not yet of the philosophic schools, but of minds whose reflections had put them in opposition to the popular stories, without making them simply "atheists."

For the proof of my case as regards the theism of Xenophanes, I am willing to abide by the impression made by a single fragment: "But without toil he swayeth all things by the thought of his mind."[1] This, it seems to me, can only mean direction of the whole by intellect. And that is definitely the introduction of a new idea as compared with the notion of a diffused sentiency and latent intelligence capable of differentiation into individuals. That Xenophanes had not, like Heraclitus, formed an organic system out of his theology together with his cosmic physics has been admitted; but I think we cannot deny to him the theistic view of the world. There would certainly be less point in his attack on the immoral representations of the gods in the mythologies of Homer and Hesiod if there

[1] ἀλλ' ἀπάνευθε πόνοιο νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει.
Fragm. 25, Diels.

were no tacit contrast of these with an ethical monotheism of his own. And by Empedocles the universality of moral law is upheld in close association with a generalised theism which is a paraphrase of the better-known expressions of Xenophanes.[1] "It is not possible for us to set God before our eyes, or to lay hold of him with our hands, which is the broadest way of persuasion that leads into the heart of man." "For he is not furnished with a human head on his body, two branches do not sprout from his shoulders, he has no feet, no swift knees, nor hairy parts; but he is only a sacred and unutterable mind flashing through the whole world with rapid thoughts." "This is not lawful for some and unlawful for others; but the law for all extends everywhere, through the wide-ruling air and the infinite light of heaven."[2]

Turning now to the corresponding passages of Heraclitus and of Æschylus, we find a remarkable coincidence of thought. First, I will quote the generalised statement of his theology by Heraclitus. "The wise is one only. It is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus."[3] Now compare his contemporary Æschylus, who makes the Chorus in the *Agamemnon*, referring to the power that gives its sanction to the moral law, hesitate to speak of this as Zeus, but, after

[1] Fragm. 23–26, of which the third was quoted above.
[2] Fragm. 133–135, Burnet's translation.
[3] ἓν τὸ σοφὸν μοῦνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα (Fragm. 32, Diels.).

a kind of deprecation, finally choose the name as permissible.

> Ζεύς, ὅστις ποτ' ἐστίν, εἰ τόδ' αὐ-
> τῷ φίλον κεκλημένῳ,
> τοῦτό νιν προσεννέπω.[1]

Among men, we may perhaps interpret, the name of the chief god of the State may be adopted, but the pure conception is to be kept clear of the mythological attributes. When the Zeus of myth is himself one of the conflicting personages in a drama among the gods, as in the *Prometheus*, the sanction is wielded by the more impersonally conceived powers of the Fates and the Erinyes.[2] Ultimately the conception of the poet, as of the philosophers in the same age, is pantheistic ; but the pantheism, it is worthy of note, includes, in modern phrase, both immanence and transcendence.

> Ζεύς ἐστιν αἰθήρ, Ζεὺς δὲ γῆ, Ζεὺς δ' οὐρανός,
> Ζεύς τοι τὰ πάντα χὤτι τῶνδ' ὑπέρτερον.[3]

Thus we find ideas characteristic of the second or idealistic period of Greek thought already expressed in the first or naturalistic. In the second period, that of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the external origin of the generalised theism is still inferrible. When they appeal, as they do, to the opinions of "wise men," it is not to Greek predecessors, to whom their attitude is far more critical than deferential. It is, I take it, to the

1 Æsch. *Ag.* 160–162.
2 *Prom. Vinct.* 516.
3 Fragm. 70 (*Heliades*).

imported idea of a creative God, now more definitely conceived as creative and as acting teleologically. For the idea of the soul, which was one of their points of contact with more primitive thought for the renewal of philosophy, they were indebted to the survival in the popular mind of a stronger animism than that of the Homeric age or of the physical philosophers. It was long before this could be cleared of its mythical associations and brought to an abstract expression of the unity of consciousness in distinction from that of an individual thing in nature ; for here the whole process of abstraction had to be performed by the idealistic thinkers. The Orphics and Pythagoreans, who were to some extent their precursors, had clothed the idea in more, and not less, elaborately imaginative form than it had for the Greeks generally. With theism it was different. This they had not to develop for the first time directly out of the polytheism of the Greeks. They could take up a known doctrine partly elaborated to their hand, though not yet brought to the strictly philosophical form that could satisfy them. And to them the essence of the doctrine seemed to be teleology. The world and its parts are directed as if by a deliberating intelligence for the good of animated beings.

Closer students of ancient thought have noted that for the Greek philosophical theism the dogma of divine unity had not the importance that moderns, under the influence of Judæo-

Christian prepossessions, are inclined to ascribe to it. Yet, as I shall try to show, the dogma was really part of what became the orthodox classical philosophy. The truth seems to be that, as the question of personality was relatively unimportant, the form of expression was indifferent. Writers pass from plural to singular (οἱ θεοί, ὁ θεός), and from personal to impersonal (τὸ θεῖον), and back again, without attaching any significance to the change. But of course moderns also often talk about "the gods" when they mean "God," and often substitute an impersonal form. Among the Greeks, no need was felt for a sustained attack upon polytheism, provided the gods were conceived ethically. This became the practically important point. And in modern times Kant held that this was the right attitude. An ethical polytheism is a higher religion than a monotheism that makes of its one God simply a celestial despot determining things according to his good pleasure.

Stress on the ethical attitude is, as we should expect, found especially in the Xenophontic Socrates. The passages in the *Memorabilia* (I. 4 and IV. 3) setting forth the "design-argument" for the belief in God or gods are rejected by some editors as interpolations; but, as I think Zeller has shown,[1] without sufficient ground. The objection seems to be that they are too like the detailed argumentations of the Stoics to belong to Socrates, or even Xenophon; but, entirely

[1] See *Philosophie der Griechen*, II. 1, pp. 172–181 (4th ed.).

apart from them, we know by the evidence of Plato also that teleology was a doctrine of the Socratic school; and insistence on small adaptations of the human organism and on the utility of the rest of the world and of animals for man does not seem incongruous with the practical character of the Socratic teaching as it was presented to and understood by Xenophon. A notable point in the exposition is the invisibility of God[1] or the gods. God is in the universe what the mind or soul of man is in the body.[2] Any one following Socrates, Xenophon adds as a comment of his own, would refrain from evil even when unseen of men, since he would hold that nothing that is done escapes the gods.[3]

The more metaphysical minds of the school, however, were not content merely with this. Even when they used the same kind of language about a providential order, they were quite aware that it was popular language. The effort to go deeper resulted in Plato's elaboration of the doctrine of Ideas. The teleological nature of this elaboration is indicated by his making the idea

[1] iv. 3, 13: ὁ τὸν ὅλον κόσμον συντάττων τε καὶ συνέχων.

[2] i. 4, 17.

[3] i. 4, 19. An indirect confirmation of the genuineness of the whole passage is to be found in the sceptical explanation put forth in a drama by Xenophon's elder contemporary Critias, the member of the Thirty, to which I shall refer later. The ethical conception of the gods is treated as the authorised doctrine; which, it is maintained, was introduced by wise legislators to hold men in awe when human laws could not reach them. Xenophon may even have been alluding to what was probably notorious as having been spoken on the stage, and thus indirectly rebutting the accusation that the teaching of Socrates, which at one time Critias had followed with interest, had helped to form unprincipled oligarchs.

of good supreme; but what is clear about the doctrine is that it aims at being science, and not merely belief. The belief in one supreme creative God and in providence Plato held to be "right opinion," and he would, no doubt, have had it taught in the rightly constituted State; but this opinion only pointed to a truth, and was not the truth itself. In the *Phædo* he makes Socrates say that in the search for truth he had turned with hope from the earlier physical thinkers to Anaxagoras, who introduced Mind as a cause of order in the world; but he was disappointed, finding in detail only mechanical agencies employed, and no systematic use made of the new principle.[1] Anaxagoras had, in fact, as later critics in antiquity came to see, and as the moderns generally allow, failed to express what we may suppose that he was driving at; namely, the distinction of a purely immaterial principle from the interacting things in the universe. Through inability to find adequate language for a distinction common sense had had no need of, he was compelled to make mind, which in reality is the condition of all knowledge, only one agent among others; so that it became no more than another cause brought into his physical explanations when the rest fell short. Thus, as far as language was concerned, he had failed to transcend the notion

1 According to the authority followed by Diogenes Laertius (ii. 45), what Plato attributed to Socrates respecting the "physicists" really applied to himself. The remark refers directly to the *Apology*; but this statement incorporated in Diogenes seems to be the source of the traditional opinion, which some of the newer critics, who are inclined to take Plato very literally, set aside.

of "spirit" as a kind of finer matter. Plato, in his theory of Ideas (whatever may have been the remoter origin of this), took a new line in supposing the reality on which ultimate explanation depends to be an order of existences corresponding to the mental concepts which his master had been the first to make the object of systematic search culminating in strict definition. The essence of the theory is that a rational order is embodied in the visible world so far as this contains reality and is not illusory appearance. To explain the illusory appearance, however, a recipient opposed to the Ideas—that is, a sort of bare negation of being—had afterwards to be introduced; and the positive doctrine itself contained difficulties which Plato was constantly seeking to resolve. In spite of what has been called, improperly as many think, his "later theory of Ideas," he never succeeded in resolving them. Though he had gone further than Anaxagoras, language could not yet be carried to the point of expressing with precision something that is not an object of perception and yet is the condition of the knowledge of all perceptible things, and, ultimately, of their being objects of perception at all. The Ideas were themselves conceived as a kind of objective Forms; and even to say that the supreme Idea—that of the Good—was "beyond Being" did not succeed in fixing for thought the notion of pure subjectivity in its opposition to the object. The process that was to end in making clear language possible about

mental existences had, however, been carried a long way from the animism and theology which had contained the first recognition of those existences as facts.

Plato's later interpreters made a great advance in conceivability when they treated the Ideas as a kind of forms within universal Mind. This conception was arrived at through the medium of Aristotle, who, beginning as Plato's disciple, became his continuator as well as critic. Aristotle was really the first to define soul and mind (that is, the intellectual part of soul, or that which deals with objects of knowledge by means of concepts) so as to distinguish them wholly from objects perceptible as something external. Thus, when Neo-Platonic writers, ancient or modern, have attributed their own doctrine to Plato, they have always been met by the strict philologists with the refusal to admit that Plato's Ideas themselves can be anything but objective Forms, existing in independence of all minds or souls. They are not to be conceived as a system in any universal Mind, but are absolutely " transcendent." When Plato speaks of God as a mind forming the universe after the system of Ideas as a pattern, this is to be taken literally—that is to say, the ultimate objects of universal Intellect exist outside it as a *prius*.

It may be that Plato, in his theory of Ideas as eternally existent Forms that are conditions of the coming into being of all things, was trying to get further beyond imaginative representation

than human thought ever can. In any case, his own school, from first to last, always recognised a mythological element in his account of creation, where he speaks as a theologian. It is not, indeed, all mythological. Plato and Aristotle, after Xenophanes and Parmenides, were "partisans of the One." The position that there is only one world or universe is not part of the mythology, but is scientifically opposed to the notion of "infinite worlds" first put forward by Anaximander. Plato means quite literally that the world is formed, as far as the nature of a material world admits, in accordance with a rational order; and this requires that it should be a total system, and therefore a unity. The notion that was only for "right opinion," and not for strict science, was that the world had been created by a first act that set it going from a certain point of time. Thus the Demiurge of the *Timæus* partly represents Plato's real thought, as being one cause or principle; but is for him mythological in so far as he is a personal creator planning the world for the best by deliberative thought and taking measures to carry out his resolve. But whence, and why, did Plato adopt this particular representation?

He adopted it not, of course, from the popular theology of the Greeks, which he treats with supreme irony, nor yet by a direct reduction of his pure philosophy to a more imaginable form; but, I contend, from the high theology that had come into Greece through contact with Asia. And

his reason for recurring to this was precisely to oppose the naturalistic cosmogonies of the poets and the physical philosophers. He meant, in philosophic truth, that the visible universe is a manifestation of something that is of mental nature. That Ideas have this nature is always clear to him, however difficult it may be to reconcile with their objectivity. Mind, therefore, must not be thought of as a product of the visible universe. A "probable account" might be given in which Reason was represented as proceeding to manifest itself in time; but the starting-point for this must be the notion of a supreme creative God, not of a "generated god" like Zeus. Such a notion, we have seen grounds for thinking, was already current. This he would have had publicly taught; the penetration to the deeper truth being reserved for those capable of a training in dialectic.

Two passages, I think, are sufficient to establish this general view. In the *Sophist* the youthful Theætetus is asked by the Eleatic stranger, setting forth the distinction between "divine" and "human" productive art (ποιητική), whether he supposes things organic and inorganic, not made by man, to come into being by the shaping action of a god, or, accepting "the opinion and speech of the many," that nature produces them from some cause that generates spontaneously and without understanding. On his expressing doubt whether in the end he will decide for this, or, as he is now inclined in deference to one older and wiser, for the cause accompanied

by reason and divine knowledge, he is told with a certain solemnity that his own reflections are sure to confirm his present inclination to the doctrine that the things of nature are made by divine art.[1] Now the views of "the many" were such as might be derived from the *Theogony* of Hesiod. Elsewhere also Plato treats with hostility the doctrine he found in the older poets, according to which gods and men were products of a chaos or gulf without mind or thought. That which he proposes to substitute for it is stated in more detail in the *Timæus*. I cite the opening of the passage as translated by Caird in *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers* (1904)[2]: "Let me tell you why nature and this universe of things was framed by him who framed it. God is good; and in a perfectly good being no envy or jealousy could ever exist in any case or at any time. Being thus far removed from any such feeling, he desired that all things should be as like himself as it was possible for them to be. This is the sovereign cause of the existence of the world of change, which we shall do well to believe on the testimony of wise men of old."

The last two words of the translation, I must observe, are not in the original, which speaks only of what ought to be received "from wise

[1] *Soph.* 265 CD. I have not departed from the traditional rendering of λόγος by "reason" here, though exact philologists object to this rendering of it before the Stoics. But is it not likely that the sense of "reckoning" or "measurement" was thus generalised occasionally by earlier writers before the Stoics could make λόγος in their determinate sense the name for the rational law of things?

[2] Vol. i. p. 243.

men" (παρ' ἀνδρῶν φρονίμων). Yet there seems to be a shade of expression that justifies the rendering. In any case, it was not made in support of a "tendency"; for Caird had no thesis to maintain as to the Eastern origin of the mythical clothing given by Plato to his account of the world and its origin. On the contrary, he regards the higher Greek theology as self-developed within the philosophy. Plato's ideal reconstitution of the State even he treats as a reform in a purely Hellenic spirit; though more than one ancient writer has noticed its affinity with Egypt and the East. The "wise men," then, I take it, are those who hold the doctrine that there is one God, who is a creator and providential ruler. And this generalised theology is that which, as I have maintained, had already spread abroad among reflective minds on the borders of the civilisations. In the plastic state of the Greek intellect, it was readily received as embodying ancient wisdom. By contrast, to the temper of a theologian, the polytheism of the cosmogonic poets would seem, in Hume's phrase, a doctrine of "superstitious atheists."

This explains how the myth of the *Timæus* has come to seem more than a myth. On a first reading, it is difficult not to think that Plato is setting forth as philosophic truth the creation of the universe by a personal God. Against this, however, the non-acceptance of that view by his school in all periods seems conclusive. And close reading of the passage shows

that he does not profess to offer a demonstration, but only to set forth what we ought to think, what it is right to receive, "according to the probable account" (*κατὰ λόγον τὸν εἰκότα*). Now we know that Plato held the objects of opinion, even the most probable, as distinguished from the objects of demonstrative knowledge, to be themselves partly unreal. This position, quite familiar to the school, was left to be applied in the particular case. The impression of great seriousness that is nevertheless given is explicable if we consider that the theory of the divine Artificer was already a doctrine of theologians, and was not merely an improvisation of Plato's own poetic fancy, as some of his myths no doubt are. And he was really serious in so far as he would have had this taught as an orthodox theology. Joseph de Maistre said with true insight that Plato was half a Chaldæan.

That the world, "this only-begotten universe," is one and not many or infinite, I do not, as I have said already, take to be part of the myth. Plato argues to it, not from the unity of the Creator, but of the system of Ideas, the pattern (*τὸ παράδειγμα*) in accordance with which it is to be formed.[1] The whole visible world must be one if it is to resemble the unity and ordered system that is truly real. For of course the Ideas, ordered under the Idea of the Good, are to Plato the absolute reality.

This doctrine that the universe, as well as God,

[1] *Timæus*, 31 A.

is one, became an essential part of ancient philosophical theism. To theism a form was given by Aristotle much more readily comprehensible than Plato's. For when we clear away from this the mythical representation, we seem to be left with an underlying view that in no way admits of personality at the summit. The Idea of the Good beyond Being can scarcely be a person. And Plato's successors in the end made it expressly not a person, though they called it God, and in strictness the only God. The God of Aristotle, on the other hand, "thinks himself." In man philosophic contemplation most resembles the divine life of thinking on thought. Man's thought is derived from God's; but God does not, as in some doctrines called pantheistic, come to consciousness only in particular beings in the universe. The unity of the whole is like that of an army in so far as it is even more expressed by the unity of the general than by the systematic order that exists through him as its cause. At the same time, the comparison to a general, or to the "one ruler" in the Homeric monarchy, only offers an analogy to the unity as realised for itself, and must not be pressed beyond this. Aristotle's God, though he may be called in modern language personal, is no more a "prince or legislator" than Spinoza's. He is the "unmoved mover," whose transcendent life draws to it all beings in the universe through the love by which they strive to ascend. This love, or desire for the perfection completely realised only in the supreme

unity, is the cause of the progressive changes through which particular beings pass in their effort to reach their own good. Of creation there is no question. The existence of the world extends through infinite past and future time, and the movements of its everlasting life are cyclical.

Thus, at the end of the second movement of Greek thought, philosophical theology reached its highest degree of clearness. It is therefore of special interest to know what account, if any, Aristotle himself has to give of its origin. Now in the *Metaphysics* he gives his view in a generalised form ; and it seems to me that on the whole this is in conformity with the thesis I have maintained. Next to the supreme God, as is known, both Plato and Aristotle placed the divine life of the heavenly bodies, with their regular motions, which were thought to be, of all motions, least removed from the character of divinity. So far as this part of the doctrine is concerned, Aristotle differs from Plato only in ceasing to employ in relation to God what he regarded as the misleading imagination of a creative Demiurge working from a model. Setting forth his doctrine of absolute monotheism in combination with this notion of mediation through the diviner parts of the universe (made of purer substance) down to sublunary things, he sums up the whole thus : " The first unmoved mover then is one, both by its definition as being of one kind, and numerically. Therefore also that which is moved ever and continuously is

one only. There is therefore only one heaven or universe. Now certain relics have been handed down from those of remotest antiquity (*παρὰ τῶν ἀρχαίων καὶ παμπαλαίων*) to later men, in the shape of a mythus, that these are gods, and that the divine encompasses the whole of nature. But the rest has come to be added mythically for the persuasion of the many and for employment in relation to the laws and utility." [1] Mythological additions, he proceeds, are the notions of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic gods, and the things related of them in accordance with their supposed nature. What was divinely said in all this was only the first part of it, namely, that the primal essences are gods. And the probability is that every art and philosophy has been discovered many times up to the limit of possible knowledge and again destroyed; and that these opinions about divine things are as it were remains of such discoveries that have been preserved until now.

The part of this relating to the intelligences that rule the stars I take to be connected with the origins of Greek astronomical science in Babylonia. Along with the generalised results of observation that gave the starting-point for rational astronomy, there came to the Greeks the system of the Babylonian planetary gods. Hence the names of corresponding Hellenic divinities were attached to the planets. The nomenclature of course passed over to the Romans, and thence into

[1] *Met.* xii. 8, 1074 *a* 36.

modern European languages. Zeller, indeed, finds in the passage a remnant of the Greek Nature-religion ;[1] but this seems to be connected with his tendency, justified on the whole, but too exclusive, to refuse recognition of the Oriental influences so often asserted on the beginnings of Greek thought. What had come to be distinctive of Hellenic religion was anthropomorphic polytheism. This, as may be seen in the passage itself, Aristotle simply sets aside whenever he has occasion to refer to it. And in the *Metaphysics*, as elsewhere, he takes up Plato's quarrel with the Greek θεολόγοι and the physical philosophers because they placed what is best last in the order of causation. Thus there seems to be no specially Greek point of contact here ; and we may take the reference to " ancestral opinion " at the end of the passage[2] to mean merely that the generalised idea of θεός, common to Hellenic religion and that which had preceded it, contains a recognition that the order and direction impressed on things come from beings having the highest degree of reality, which is mental. The important point for our present purpose is that Aristotle regards the elevated theology which he disentangles from its association with popular religion as an inheritance from a past era of civilisation, and as attained in that era by the insight of the few. That he connects his theory of origins with a universalised doctrine of cycles which no one

[1] *Philosophie der Griechen*, II. 2, p. 467 (3rd ed.).

[2] *Met.* xii. 8, 1074 b 13 : ἡ μὲν οὖν πάτριος δόξα καὶ ἡ παρὰ τῶν πρώτων ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἡμῖν φανερὰ μόνον.

will now accept does not seem to me to destroy its value as evidence of the actual historical process.

Here I come to the end of the fragmentary indications that seem to me to confirm the deductive argument for the origin of Greek philosophical theology in the generalised monotheism, not yet philosophical, which we know to have emerged in Eastern antiquity. Research would probably reveal more indications of the kind. Those that I have given are merely things held in memory without special attention before I had arrived at the theory. From the post-Aristotelian period of course there can be no evidence worth anything. Assertions long after the date, that the early philosophers had studied under Egyptian priests, Magians, and so forth, form, indeed, a large mass of apparent testimony, but these Zeller has effectively swept away. After Aristotle, Greek philosophy proceeded entirely from its own resources. Everything in the later schools can be explained as a development from their predecessors. The newer East had taken paths of its own; and from these the philosophic path, even when there seemed to be an approximation, was wholly apart. What came to the later Greeks, and afterwards to the Romans, from the East was a new influx of ritual, myth, and mystery. The philosophers were sometimes interested in this; but nowhere can it be shown that it had any power to modify their philosophy. It is not, unfortunately, that they were untouched by

superstition. The famous saying, to be met with in Cicero, that there is nothing so absurd that it has not been said by some philosopher, refers to the profusion of ingenious defences, not only of the official augury, but of all sorts of magical practices and observances of omens that were not even part of the State-religion. And in the *Philopseudes* of Lucian the philosophers are treated as especially responsible for the encouragement of superstitions new and old. The immense multiplication of all this, authorised and unauthorised, in ancient life, did not, however, interfere essentially with philosophic liberty. The defences of it were gratuitous, and any one who liked could attack it. There has never been a more drastic attack than that of Carneades which furnished Cicero with the materials for the second of his two books *On Divination*.

Of the philosophic schools that flourished in the Greek and afterwards the Græco-Roman world from the third century before to the second after the Christian era, some accepted, and some, either positively or with more or less of sceptical reserve, rejected the theism that now claimed to stand, not on the authority of past teachers, but on demonstration. A portion of the demonstrations offered might be the general consent of mankind; but this shows how far we have travelled from the origins. A doctrine at first put forward as the result of special insight, as difficult to prove, and as opposed to the prejudices of the vulgar, was now declared to be merely

an innate idea made explicit. Generalised theism became a kind of semi-official philosophy. With inclusion of the immortality of the soul, it was expressly attached to the Socratico-Platonic tradition. Cicero in the *Tusculans* calls the philosophies outside of this the "plebeian philosophies." Plato had set the tone in his treatment of the "earth-born," the γηγενεῖς, who grasp rocks and trees and think they have got hold of realities. This, of course, refers to the materialistic Atomists, though Plato nowhere mentions Democritus by name. And Cicero has in view especially the Epicureans, always treated academically as only half-trained; with some justification on account of the badness of their science, relative as well as absolute. Yet we find in the Stoics, who were on the whole the most influential school during the period, a peculiar combination of theism with materialism.

While the Stoic theology is in strict definition a naturalistic pantheism, its teachers use the language of personal theism, and in particular carry their doctrine of providential government into the most trivial details, regarding the universe consistently as ordered for the sake of man. Their period, it has often been said, was dominated by practical interests. The task now laid on philosophy was to become a rule of life for the individual. Under the Macedonian and afterwards the Roman supremacy, the city-State had been depressed to the rank of a municipality. Thus the old systems of customary morality of which it had been the

centre were no longer adequate; nor could they be replaced by a legislation reasoned out in the manner of Plato and Aristotle; for this, however it might point beyond it, still presupposed the type of civic life that belonged to the past. Philosophy, therefore, in order to become effectively a theory of practice, had to withdraw itself from the refinements of the Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics and fall back on distinctions more accessible to common sense. On the one side, it is as if the world found itself for the time unequal to the strain of further subjective thinking, and had to take refuge in the earlier point of view for which objective things were directly apprehensible in their reality. On the other side, if a religious need was felt, a doctrine was required less remote from common modes of feeling than idealistic philosophy. God must be conceived as permeating the world and everywhere active. Aristotle's eternal and unmoved essence, separated from perceptible things, having no extension, but without parts and indivisible,[1] seemed too far away from mankind. Thus, while in detail the Stoics took much from Aristotle, they went back for a physical theology to Heraclitus. Their naturalism was, moreover, like that of the Epicureans, explicitly materialistic, as the naturalism of the early schools had not

1 *Met.* xii. 7, 1073 a 3: *ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἔστιν οὐσία τις ἀΐδιος καὶ ἀκίνητος καὶ κεχωρισμένη τῶν αἰσθητῶν, φανερὸν ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων. δέδεικται δὲ καὶ ὅτι μέγεθος οὐδὲν ἔχειν ἐνδέχεται ταύτην τὴν οὐσίαν, ἀλλ' ἀμερὴς καὶ ἀδιαίρετός ἐστιν.*

been.[1] Everything to which a name can be given is accordingly, by Zeno as by Epicurus, declared to be either body or some property or determination of it, or a "phantasm" raised by the interaction of bodies. The particular kind of body selected by the Stoics as ultimately real was, however, not the hard atom of Democritus and Epicurus, but the elemental fire of Heraclitus, which is transformed into all the other elements and reappears as the final result of their transformations. This is continuous, not discrete like the atoms; so that there is no empty space or vacuum within the world. The universe is a plenum. The fiery breath (πνεῦμα) that pervades all things is at the same time the divine reason (λόγος) that rules them. Souls are separated parts of it, and return to it. The world passes through a series of absolutely identical cycles. At the end of each, all particular things are resolved into the primeval fire, out of which again everything emerges in repeated succession from the beginning of a new world-period. This, according to the most accurate view now attainable,[2] was not part of the theory of Heraclitus, who held the transformations to be continuously going on in all parts of the whole, but supposed this to remain

1 Explicit materialism—the assertion that body is known as something real and that all reality is body—came in by reaction after the subjective criticism of the Sophists had attacked the dogmatism of the early thinkers. It is on record that Democritus, as well as Plato, replied to Protagoras on behalf of the attainability of objective truth. See Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* vii. 389. The passage is noted by Ritter und Preller, and cited by Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 2nd ed., vol. i. (1906), p. 371,

2 Anticipated by Toland, the Deist.

always an ordered system of the same kind. Whether the Word (λόγος) of Heraclitus ever means precisely Reason is a disputed question; but his essential thought seems to have been reproduced by the Stoics. There is a cosmic order knowable by human intelligence; and this is ultimately identical with what is "common" or universal in man.

During the predominance of Stoicism and Epicureanism, the Platonic and Aristotelian schools had, of course, gone on at Athens under an uninterrupted series of scholarchs. The Lyceum devoted itself especially to learned and scientific studies. The Academy underwent many variations, the most interesting of these being the turning of the Platonic dialectic to sceptical account against the dogmatism of the Stoics and, to a less extent, of the Epicureans. A little before the Christian era it returned to the teaching, now, however, rather eclectic, of Plato's positive doctrine; but simultaneously a new school arose that attached itself to the name of Pyrrho, whose reputation as a sceptic had been preserved from the time of Alexander, with whom he was contemporary. Renouncing the positive search for truth, subjective criticism, whether of the New Academy or of the Pyrrhonists, turned all its resources to showing that the materialistic schools had failed to prove the existence of those objective realities which they required in order to establish the foundations of their systems. By the test of perception to which they appealed,

it was impossible for them to point to anything that was more than phenomenal or other than relative. Nothing "absolute"[1] can be demonstrated anywhere. Meanwhile all the schools took part in the search for a moral rule or plan of life. This development had resulted, by the end of the second century of the Christian era, in what we call broadly "modern" ethics. The arguments of Sextus Empiricus on the variations of ethical systems are sufficient in themselves to prove, by implication, that this had become the norm. We shall see the importance of the whole development later.

The ethical problem was now the conduct of the individual in relation to humanity, not a mode of life practicable only in a favoured city-State. Similarly in metaphysics, through the detailed advances of psychology and the effort after general intelligibility, distinctions that bore the stamp of the individual genius of Plato and Aristotle had been practically effaced to make room for those that still remain current for modern Europe. Hence the greater accessibility for us of systems belonging to the later period.[2] Something of this modernness belongs also to the last philosophic school of antiquity, that of Neo-Platonism, founded by Plotinus at Rome in the third century, when Stoicism could no longer give satisfaction. While it is essentially a return, aided by the more exact study of Plato

1 In Sextus Empiricus the term *ἀπόλυτον* is frequent in this philosophical sense.

2 This is a point well brought out in Caird's *Evolution of Theology*.

and Aristotle, to idealism as a positive doctrine, the idealism is more like the doctrine called by the same name in modern times than is that of the earlier thinkers. Not essentially the concept against the particular that comes under it, nor yet permanence as against flux, furnishes the principle of its antitheses, but consciousness as contrasted with its object. Here, however, we have to deal with Neo-Platonism, not in its general relations, but only as one form of the Greek philosophical theology.

For Plotinus, as for Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, the world, like its principle, is one. The reality in it is a system of permanent individual beings, mental in nature. At the summit is the transcendent unity identified with Plato's Idea of the Good. The One (τὸ ἕν) is beyond consciousness and thought, and can be directly seized only in a mystical experience, though its necessity as principle admits of rational proof. It creates (ποιεῖ) the realities in the universe, which are real in descending degrees, till at last Matter is reached, which is no reality at all, but, as in the system of Aristotle, a bare possibility of becoming, or rather of appearing to become, all things. For the external world is (in modern language) a phenomenal manifestation. In it the realities are shown reflected as in a mirror and seemingly set apart. Matter, in fact, is a name summing up the generalisation that in the world of experience the unextended realities called souls are in a peculiar association with bodies apparently

divided from one another in a spatial world. Thus at the lowest stage in the system is Matter, which is negative, a principle of division and in this sense of evil. Next come determinate Bodies, which are appearances partially manifesting the Ideas or general concepts from which they receive their names. Above Body is Soul: this, in relation to its associated organism, is "all in all and all in every part," unlike any quality of extended body, such as colour, which can never be thus described. Soul includes not only the principle of consciousness but also of animal motion and vegetative life, and so is in active relation to the world. Above it is Mind, or pure Intellect, which, as with Aristotle, thinks only itself and not the world. This, in the system of Plotinus, contains the Ideas or general Forms according to which all things are "made." Mind and Soul are individualised in particular minds and souls, but these are not to be thought of as in reality apart. All souls coexist in the Soul of the whole; and, in the "intelligible world" of universal Intellect, minds all subsist together, without spatial division and without succession of consciousness in time. Beyond the intelligible world a higher principle of unity is logically required because Mind, in thinking itself, still retains a certain duality—the duality of intelligence and the intelligible Being that it knows, though this is itself. The principle of all, beyond even this degree of duality, is the One that is none of the

things that are in the world, though all are its product.

This general doctrine, it seems to me, is not wrongly described as an idealistic pantheism. It is pantheistic in explicitly rejecting the personality of God and the production of the world by volition. The world, says Plotinus, must flow from its principle by a "natural" process, not by planning and deliberation, like the works of human art. At the same time, the Neo-Platonic pantheism may be said to incorporate ethical theism. The world is as if it had been planned for an end, and justice is ultimately realised in the system; partly in the moral order we can see, but, it is admitted, not wholly in this. The life of the soul, however, goes on, and its fate in its next manifestation depends upon what has been done here. Evil is a necessity if there is to be, among the degrees of reality, a world like ours; and our world, such as it is, is so far a manifestation of goodness and beauty that its existence is preferable to its non-existence. For we have to remember that the question is not whether men and animals should be what they are or be something higher, but whether they should be what they are or not be at all. And there is ascent or descent in the scale according to the degree of knowledge and virtue attained.

The optimism of the Neo-Platonic system, defended by Plotinus against external attack, was brought into a more finished form by Proclus, who occupied Plato's chair at Athens in the fifth

century, being the last great teacher before the schools of pagan philosophy were suppressed by Justinian. Matter, he explained, is not properly to be called evil, but only "necessary." Evils arise through conflict in the world of things apparently set apart; and this conflict, the school from Plotinus onward agreed, is a condition, as Heraclitus had said, of the "alternating harmony" of the world. Thus the first and the last expressions of Greek theodicy coincide. And in its statement by Proclus the defence of the providential order was taken over by Christian scholasticism, whence it passed to the moderns.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE OPPOSITION

PURE theism, as developed in the Greek philosophical schools, it has sometimes been thought, must have come into collision at first with popular opinion; and the cases of Anaxagoras and of Socrates have been supposed to illustrate this. Anaxagoras was closely associated with Pericles, who had been influenced by him as a thinker. In consequence of this relation, the political enemies of the statesman brought a prosecution against the philosopher for impiety, and he had to leave Athens, where he had settled. This has been supposed to illustrate the hostility of naturalistic polytheism to a doctrine like that of the Anaxagorean Nous, pure from all mixture with the material elements and bringing them into order. The case of Socrates, a generation later, seemed another illustration of the same hostility to a "spiritual" teaching; and he has sometimes been regarded as a martyr of monotheism.

This explanation is no longer in fashion, and, indeed, it is easily refuted. In both cases the motives at work were essentially political, and religion was only a pretext; but, so far as religious bigotry could be called in, it consisted in a

prejudice against what seemed too audaciously naturalistic explanations, such as the description of the sun by Anaxagoras as a red-hot stone. In the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, it is not the introduction of mind to put things in order, but of a mechanical vortex, that is the ground of accusation against the philosophers. And the "new gods" that Socrates was accused of substituting for those of the city meant probably the divine voice of warning which he was accustomed to describe as a psychological experience of his own. This may have been regarded by vulgar prejudice as a sort of unauthorised private oracle, but little could be made of it by itself; and we know from Plato's *Euthyphro* that only a very moderate degree of enlightenment was needed to treat this particular charge with contempt.

Whatever may be the precise explanation of events not known in anything like their full detail, I cannot agree with those who regard the Athenian democracy as peculiarly bigoted and intolerant. Socrates himself recognised that he could have lived his life of discussion nowhere but at Athens; and the occasional outbursts there of a natural conservatism of custom as against new thought perhaps only prove that Athens was the one city of Greece where thought was practically influential and not limited to a few curious inquirers. There was, it is true, misunderstanding on both sides. The democracy did not sufficiently recognise that not the maintenance of custom, religious and other, but critical

thought, was the condition of its effective survival; and the Socratic school failed to see in democracy its own natural atmosphere, and looked rather to an enlightened oligarchy, if not a monarchy, as the ideal. Athens, however, in spite of the death of Socrates, became the centre of the philosophic schools of Greece. And the later philosophers, Greek and Roman, while varying in their leanings as between aristocracy and democracy, were at any rate consistently republican to the end of the ancient world. This applies also to the philosophic emperors, who abhorred the name and memory of despotism. As regards religious persecution, the plain fact remains that Greece and Athens have a far milder record than any modern nation whatever if we go back only a little way into its historic past.

It is true that the philosophers, theistic and other, had to proceed with caution. We may see this from Cicero in the time of most undisturbed tolerance. Whatever speculative attacks men educated in philosophy may permit themselves in private on the absurdities of ritual and myth, all agree that religious custom is to be maintained publicly.[1] Cicero's own philosophic creed was, as is known, a very generalised theism which included a doctrine of the immortality of the soul. And this I think Cudworth and the Deists, from their different points of view, were right in holding to have been in the main the formal doctrine of

[1] *De Div.* ii. 33, 70: "retinetur autem et ad opinionem vulgi et ad magnas utilitates reipublicæ mos, religio, disciplina, ius augurium, collegii auctoritas."

educated men for a long way back in classical antiquity. It could easily enter into alliance with a conservative attitude to ceremonial usage, though, in fact, it was unnecessary ; for a perfectly irreligious position was quite compatible with abstinence from attack. In private discussion it was an obvious topic with members of the schools less friendly to theism to point out that the religious Stoic used misleading language when he gave the name of Zeus, the subject of the popular legends, to the God of philosophy. The discredit into which the legends had fallen may be inferred as early as Aristophanes, who certainly believed as little in the popular stories as Euripides or Socrates. It has been said with truth that what gives point to his ridicule is really the idea of the divine. The pure theism which, I have argued, was permeating the educated classes from the sixth century onward had already become so fixed as the true notion of deity—if a deity existed—that we have to bear it in mind to understand a scene of the *Frogs*. Bacchus and his slave Xanthias submit themselves to the torture to try which is the god, and the test is impassibility[1] : both show pretty plainly by their cries that they do feel pain, but with well-matched ingenuity they turn it off. Yet Aristophanes, while thus indulging his humour with a boldness that seems greater than that of Lucian during the decay of classical religion, could pose

[1] εἴπερ θεὸς γάρ ἐστιν, οὐκ αἰσθήσεται.
*Ranæ*, 634.

as the champion of conservative orthodoxy against the new enlightenment.

This enlightenment was represented, in the latter part of the fifth century B.C., by the class of teachers known as the Sophists. Of that class Socrates in popular esteem was a member. What he had in common with it was a predominantly subjective attitude as compared with the objective direction that had characterised the inquiries of the physical philosophers. The Sophists were the first professional instructors in grammar, rhetoric, and humane culture generally. They undertook, especially, to train promising young men for public life. Their occupation with the humanities had had the incidental effect of turning sceptical reflection on the divergent doctrines in which investigations of natural causes had ended. A well-known example of the results to which this led exists in the record of the treatise of Gorgias in which he maintained that the general term nature, as employed by the physical philosophers, was a name for nothing real, or for something of which there could be no knowledge, or at any rate of which no knowledge was communicable. The general drift of the new ideas is summed up in the saying of Protagoras that "man is the measure of all things." This, according to Plato's liberal interpretation of the doctrine in the *Theætetus*, meant that pure truth is unattainable, but that there is a certain useful art of persuading men to think about things as it is good for them that they should think. It is on record that

Protagoras, in a published treatise, disclaimed all knowledge of the gods, whether they exist or not, by reason of the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of human life. This led to his banishment from Athens.

That the Sophists were not, as was long held, corrupters of youth for gain, whom Socrates set himself in a moral interest to oppose, has been made clear by many writers, especially by Grote, who first established the view now generally accepted. Yet, after all that has been said on their behalf, it remains true that Socrates had a far more serious purpose. The mere external facts raise a presumption of this. The Sophists were foreigners at Athens and not strongly attached to any State. They received payment and were able to accumulate fortunes by teaching. Socrates was a native Athenian citizen who lived in poverty for the sake of devoting himself to discussion. And the record of Xenophon as well as of Plato, taken along with the statements of Aristotle, proves that he first set himself with complete self-consciousness to investigate the nature of the concept or general idea. This became the scientific point of departure for a constructive idealism, as distinguished from the merely negative criticism that ended in denial of the possibility of knowledge. That his own constructive aims were direct, and had not all to wait for the mediation of Plato, may be inferred from some positions brought out by Xenophon. For, though he did not first state it, he defended with arguments

of his own the kind of ethical theism that afterwards, as I have said, became semi-official in the educated world of antiquity.

To the mass of his Athenian contemporaries, however, the influence of Socrates appeared to be simply a dissolvent. He was by repute the master of Critias and Alcibiades, and those brilliant "super-men" were thought to be in the worst sense typical pupils of the Sophists. A fragment of a satyric drama of Critias called the *Sisyphus*, preserved by Sextus Empiricus,[1] contains a remarkable statement of a theory commonly regarded as characteristic of the eighteenth century, explaining the belief in a moral god or gods as a device of legislators. Critias, says Sextus,[2] seems to belong to the ranks of the atheists, when he says that the ancient lawgivers fabricated God (ἔπλασαν τὸν θεόν) as an overseer of the right actions and the sins of men; so that no one might secretly injure his neighbour, for fear of vengeance from the gods. Now this interests us in two ways. First it shows that a compromise had already been arrived at by which the one God of the thinkers and the many gods of the multitude could be spoken of in alternation and by an almost unconscious transition. The essential point insisted on was the ethical character of Deity, unity or

[1] Diels, who gives the passage in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 2nd ed., vol. ii. 1 (1907), pp. 620–622, accepts the ascription to Critias, though some authorities assigned it to a drama of Euripides with the same title.

[2] *Adv. Math.* ix. 54.

plurality being a secondary consideration. This interpretation does not come from Sextus : Critias, as we shall see, makes the transition from one mode of speech to another in the same way. In the second place, we perceive the rise of a speculation, in advanced circles that had undergone the Sophistic training, to explain the origin, not of any theology whatever, but precisely of this ethical theism. So fixed it was as the norm by the fifth century B.C. To bring out these points I proceed to translate the passage in full :

" There was a time when the life of men was unordered and brutish and subjected to main force ; when there was no reward for the good and no punishment came to the bad. And then, I think, men appointed laws as chastisers, that justice should be ruler and keep wanton insolence in bondage : and if one transgressed, he was punished. Thereafter, when the laws hindered indeed wrongful works done by open violence, but men continued to do them by stealth, some shrewd and wise-thoughted man found out an object of awe for mortals, that there might be some dread to the wicked even if they do or say or think anything in secret. Whence he brought in the divinity (τὸ θεῖον), telling them that there is a Deity (ὡς ἔστι δαίμων), vigorous with imperishable life, hearing and seeing with the mind, with sure thought attending to these things, and clothed with a divine nature, who will hear all that is said among mortals and will have power to see all that is done. And if in silence

thou plan a wicked deed, this shall not escape the gods: for in them is careful thought. By this discourse he introduced the most welcome of teachings, hiding the truth with a false story (ψευδεῖ καλύψας τὴν ἀλήθειαν λόγῳ). And there, where he could most astound the senses of men by saying that the gods dwelt, there he placed them: in the vault of heaven above, whence, he knew, are the terrors that descend upon mortals and the benefits that help their toilsome life. There he saw that the lightnings were, and the dire strokes of the thunder, and the star-eyed body of the sky, the fair-wrought broidery of Time, the wise artist; whence rises the glowing mass of the day-star and moist showers are poured down to the earth. Such lines of fear he set around men,[1] and fairly constituted the Deity by his fiction[2] and in a fitting place, and quelled lawlessness with laws." "Thus, in my opinion, some one first persuaded mortals to think that there is a race of deities."

Against this, the fatal objection is already put by Sextus. If the belief was implanted by legislators for the sake of moral government, how did they first come upon the notion of gods, when no one had handed it down?[3] Besides, he adds, nationalities were at first separate, and how did the legislators come to coincide? "For

[1] Or, according to the reading selected by Diels: "Such fears he shook around upon men."

[2] Diels, in a note, suggests "*durch seine Fiktion*" as the rendering here of τῷ λόγῳ.

[3] *Adv. Math.* ix. 31.

all men have a common preconception about God, according to which he is a blessed living being, immortal and perfect in happiness, and not admitting of any ill; and it is altogether irrational to suppose that all hit upon the same properties by chance, without being naturally moved thus to affirm them."[1] This, it must be remembered, is not an argument on behalf of theism, but is the objection of a sceptic against a particular theory of origins. From the negative side, it seems to me to confirm the view I have maintained: namely, that ethical theism arose as a rational speculation in an advanced state of culture and not without contact between nationalities.

Another explanation of the origin of the belief in gods which Sextus is able to dispose of by arguments still valid is the theory called "Euhemerism," from a member of the Cyrenaic school who wrote a treatise or romance in support of it. Euhemerus, who lived under Cassander (311–298 B.C.),[2] is thought to have arrived at his theory by suggestion from the deifications of kings which the Macedonian dynasties were adopting in his time from the traditional usages of Asia. The gods of mythology, said Euhemerus, are all deified men. As Sextus interprets it, the earliest dynasts procured to themselves divine honours in order to maintain their power, and came afterwards to be thought gods. But, as he goes on

[1] *Adv. Math.* ix. 33.
[2] See Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*, II. 1, p. 343, *n.* (4th ed.).

to object, how did they first think of causing themselves to be regarded as divine if they had not a pre-existent idea of divinity ?[1] From the evolutionary point of view by which the Spencerian form of the "ghost-theory" differs from Euhemerism, it might indeed be replied that the early kings did not precisely cause themselves to be deified, but that honours were slowly accumulated upon them after their decease, and that thus the ghost of a powerful king, without abrupt transition, became what was afterwards called a god. Sextus has anticipated the argument from experience that tells most strongly against this also. An apotheosis, he proceeds, becomes permanent only when the person deified succeeds in annexing some pre-existent divine name.[2] The particular cases that he gives—namely, that an actual "Alcæus, the son of Amphitryon," obtained the title of a pre-existent god Heracles, and that the historical Tyndarids received the honours of the divine Dioscuri, by which were meant "the two hemispheres, that above the earth and that below the earth"—would not now be admitted by comparative mythologists. The rejection, however, only strengthens the negative argument of Sextus ; for the accepted view is that the heroes never existed as such, but that the stories of them were those of ancient gods brought down to mortality.[3]

1 *Adv. Math.* ix. 34 : *αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἱ εἰς θεοὺς ἀνάγοντες αὐτοὺς πῶς ἔννοιαν ἔλαβον θεῶν εἰς ἣν αὐτοὺς ἐνέταξαν ;*

2 *Ibid.* ix. 35–38.

3 This view is set forth at length by Ed. Meyer in his *Geschichte des*

From what he says about the symbolism in the head-dress of the Dioscuri,[1] it might be imagined that Sextus is hinting at a theory of the derivation of gods from cosmic powers ; but this is not so. Whatever faint reserve, or perhaps personal sentiment, he may have in favour of some such theory,[2] he is formally a pure sceptic, rejecting in turn every theory of origins, just as he afterwards rejects as inconclusive every positive argument for theism. This impartiality makes his work an extremely valuable repertory of arguments on both sides ; and I shall have to return to it. In the meantime, something must be said about the chief school, apart from the Sceptics, that stood out against the received philosophical religion.

For the history of philosophy the names of typical "atheists," like Diagoras of Melos and Theodorus the Cyrenaic, do not fill a very important place. They were "characters" whose sayings were remembered rather than great original thinkers. The anecdotes in which they figure represent them especially as deriding the popular

*Alterthums*. The ground of it, to take a typical case, I suppose to be this. If, as is a fact, there was a cult of Zeus Agamemnon at Sparta, it is easier to explain how from this centre the name of a hero Agamemnon, derived from the god, spread over all Greece, than it would be to explain how a human hero rose to the rank of a god in one particular State, and that remarkable for its conservatism. The case of Helen, who was a Spartan goddess, is similar. Achilles, again, was worshipped in Thessaly as a god, whereas he was merely a hero for the rest of Greece.

1 *Adv. Math.* ix. 37 : πίλους τ'ἐπιτιθέασιν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐπὶ τούτοις ἀστέρας. αἰνισσόμενοι τὴν τῶν ἡμισφαιρίων κατασκευήν.

2 *Ibid.* ix. 40 : τινὰ μὲν γὰρ λόγου ἴσως ἔχεται, καθάπερ τὸ τὴν γῆν θεὸν νομίζειν, οὐ τὴν αὐλακοτομουμένην ἢ ἀνασκαπτομένην οὐσίαν, ἀλλὰ τὴν διήκουσαν ἐν αὐτῇ δύναμιν καὶ καρποφόρον φύσιν καὶ ὄντως δαιμονιωτάτην.

gods; though clearly they were also deniers of any providential direction of the world. The Epicureans, on the other hand, who left to the glorified popular gods a tranquil life in the *intermundia*, were serious opponents of philosophical theism. This, as has been noticed incidentally, did not arise from the goodness of their science. Democritus, indeed, from whom Epicurus derived his Atomism, was a genuinely scientific thinker; and the atomic theory, neglected by the science of later antiquity, which was not ready for it, but was making some progress along other paths, has become the most powerful instrument of modern physics and chemistry. Thus Epicureanism, for the early modern period, was particularly suggestive, in spite of its want of scientific value as a whole. Now, however, that all suggestiveness in the speculations of the ancient atomists has been completely exhausted, the merits of Epicureanism are clearly perceived to consist in the stand it made against existing superstition, and not in its view of the whole of things. This stand it was enabled to make, not by any radical denial of the popular gods; for the theory above referred to may have been piously accepted in the school. Since, however, they were removed from all possibility of interference with the natural course of events, being themselves merely aggregates of finer atoms, a thoroughgoing affirmation of law in the physical world was necessitated. And from this basis, defective, and indeed belated, as was so much of the detailed theorising, Lucretius

could direct his attack with unsurpassable force against the archaic *religio*, the bond of supernatural terror of which the extreme expression had once been human sacrifice. This terror he doubtless saw as the inner meaning of the rituals of old priesthoods above which the civic order of Rome was precariously erected.

Intellectually, though not emotionally, the protest might have been made with just as much effect from the point of view of philosophical theism or pantheism; but undoubtedly those are right who have held that the position of the Epicureans, in view of the theological doctrines already formulated in antiquity, amounted to speculative atheism. This was abundantly set forth by Cudworth in the seventeenth century. When Lucretius composed his poem (published after his death in 55 B.C.) philosophical theism was a reigning belief; and, that he may sweep away every vestige of the supernatural, he strikes at its base. The ground of the attack is the denial that the universe can be a single system, as the ancient theists maintained that it was. Matter is infinite in quantity. Therefore, since nothing is sole of its kind, and there is nothing to limit the number of the worlds, these must be innumerable. The Epicurean worlds are not, of course, the innumerable worlds of Bruno, each consisting of a sun (which is one of the fixed stars) together with a system of revolving planets. They are worlds such as ours appears to be, with a central earth having sun, moon, and stars, and

generally "meteors" like those of our sky, surrounding it. The conception had come to Democritus from Anaximander, and had been accepted by Epicurus and his school unmodified, without regard to the new developments of mathematical astronomy; the constitution ascribed to each world being an impossible one according to what was then accurately known. None the less, the idea of the infinite universe is turned with the most powerful effect against the notion that a mind conceived on the analogy of man's is the governor of the whole.

> Quis regere immensi summam, quis habere profundi
> Indu manu validas potis est moderanter habenas,
> Quis pariter cælos omnis convertere et omnis
> Ignibus ætheriis terras suffire feraces,
> Omnibus inve locis esse omni tempore præsto? [1]

Thus Lucretius cannot, as Heraclitus is thought to have done,[2] threaten mystery-mongers with the wrath to come, since there is no cosmic law that is also divine reason to appeal to; but the protest of human reason and conscience against the "wicked and impious deeds" of religion [3] has been found all the more moving.

If the philosophy of theism failed to gain the assent of Lucretius, it was not for want of argumentative statement. How far this had been carried may be shown from the account which

[1] *De Rerum Natura*, ii. 1095–1099.

[2] See Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd ed., p. 189.

[3] Illud in his rebus vereor ne forte rearis
Impia te rationis inire elementa viamque
Indugredi sceleris. Quod contra sæpius illa
Religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta.
*De Rerum Natura*, i. 80–83.

Sextus gives of the Stoic modes of proof. The Stoics had substantially put forward every one of the famous arguments that Kant set himself to demolish theoretically in the "Transcendental Dialectic." To Cleanthes a form of the "ontological argument" is ascribed. Since one nature is better than another, there must be some best nature, and this can only be God.[1] With Zeno the same form of argument had taken a more pantheistic turn. The world, being most perfect, must have mind and soul; for that which has them is better than that which has them not.[2] To the Stoics also is attributed the "cosmological argument" from the world to an intelligent cause of motion.[3] But this, again, is conceived pantheistically, as the active element that runs through the world, and is its directive principle.[4] From Xenophon is cited the teleological argument to an artificer of the human body; who, since this is accompanied by mind, must possess mind in surpassing degree.[5] This mode of proof, likewise taken up and elaborated by the Stoics, is that which is called by Kant the "physico-theological."

The objections to these proofs go back for the most part to Carneades (213–129 B.C.), the greatest sceptical mind of antiquity. To understand his position, we must remember that, as Professor

1 *Adv. Math.* ix. 88–91.
2 *Ibid.* ix. 104: οὐδὲν δέ γε κόσμου κρεῖττον· νοερὸς ἄρα καὶ ἔμψυχός ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος.
3 *Ibid.* ix. 111 ff.
4 *Ibid.* ix. 119–120.
5 *Ibid.* ix. 92 ff.

Carveth Read puts it,[1] he had glissaded from Platonism. This means that no offered proofs seemed to him to satisfy the Platonic ideal of knowledge. On theism, the sceptical argumentation of Carneades, as developed by Sextus, is in sum this: God, being perfect, must have virtue[2]; must indeed, it is maintained, have each and all of the human virtues and the senses they imply; for there is greater perfection in having any power whatsoever than in having it not. But to have any sense or virtue implies capability of modification, of human weakness, of affection by pain as well as by pleasure. Beings thus constituted are subject to dissolution, and this is contrary to the notion of divinity. An argument of Carneades in the form of a sorites was thought especially conclusive; doubtless because, notwithstanding its captious appearance, it went to the heart of the Stoic compromise. If Zeus is a god, then Poseidon, being his brother, must be a god; if Poseidon, then Achelous; if Achelous, then the Nile and every river; if every river, then the mountain-streams also and torrents must be gods. But since these are not gods, no more is Zeus. Yet, if there were any gods, Zeus would be a god. Therefore there are no gods.[3] And so the argument proceeds, starting with any of the greater gods or goddesses. If

1 *The Metaphysics of Nature*, 2nd ed. (1908), p. 86.

2 *Adv. Math.* ix. 172: μὴ ἔχων δὲ θεὸς ἀρετὴν ἀνύπαρκτός ἐστιν. *Cf.* 175.

3 *Ibid.* ix. 183: εἰ δέ γε ἦσαν θεοί, καὶ ὁ Ζεὺς ἦν ἂν θεός. οὐκ ἄρα θεοί εἰσίν.

Aphrodite, then every passion of the soul.[1] If Demeter, who is interpreted as Mother Earth, then the mountains and promontories and every stone must be gods.[2] Thus the Sceptic, without concluding positively, for these arguments were put forth only as cancelling others allowed to be of equal weight, in effect went further than the Epicurean, in so far as he directed his attack against philosophical and popular religion together. Since the Stoic called the supreme divinity, the Reason of the World, Zeus, and allegorised the greater gods into natural powers, he must be compelled to carry out his system into a longer chain of deductions, and must consent that it should be tested by its weakest link.

Sextus Empiricus, who has preserved the arguments of the older and newer Sceptics, along with developments of his own, wrote late in the second century of the Christian era. Neither in his work nor anywhere in the compilation called by the name of Diogenes Laertius, which in its present form dates from the beginning of the third century, do we perceive the faintest sign of a new movement on the horizon. For anything that might appear, all was about to end in sterility. Yet, as we have seen, the Greek intellect rallied for a last effort ; and this took the direction of an idealistic return to Plato and Aristotle. Now Scepticism, Academical or Pyrrhonic, had never been seriously turned against the doctrines of the great idealists. Theoretical materialism of one

1 *Adv. Math.* ix. 186–188. 2 *Ibid.* ix. 189.

kind or another having been predominant, the Sceptics attacked the prevailing dogmatism. Thus the Neo-Platonic system, when it appeared, did not need to meet sceptical attack, but, so far as it was polemical, continued to oppose the weakened Stoicism, though with a constructive instead of a destructive aim. If, however, a systematic reply had been called for, such a reply could now have been offered both to the Sceptics and to the Epicureans. The One, the supreme principle of Plotinus, it could have been said, does not need to possess any virtue, because it is above even thought. It does not wield or direct the world in human fashion; the world is its product by a kind of natural necessity. Nor is there any pretence, though it is sometimes called θεός, of identifying it in name with any of the popular gods. The system, indeed, of allegorising the myths still went on; and myths were even more liberally accepted from all quarters: but this did not affect Neo-Platonism as pure philosophy. How is it then that ancient thought ends here, and that another philosophical renewal only came after a break in culture?

The answer is that the religious problem had now become the essential one. The fact that Neo-Platonism, however it might try to maintain an alliance with popular religion, was in reality more removed from it than Stoicism, was fatal. In the actual world—the world, as the philosophers would have said, of mixture—the question, what

was to be the religious belief of the mass of mankind, was all-important. Philosophy was not in a position effectively to inspire those who had the practical government of affairs; and this meant, at that stage of history, that a popular religion which was taken seriously by directing minds, even of inferior order, and could adapt itself at once to despots and the crowd, must conquer. To understand the process, we shall have to return to the point from which we started, and follow the development of the religions that grew up with a life of their own stronger than that of any rival power, whether philosophy or the State.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PERSIANS AND THE JEWS

The religion of the ancient Persians, by general consent one of the higher religions of the world, has counted for comparatively little in universal history. Though propagated with zeal, both in its official form of Zoroastrianism and in its later offshoot Mithraism, it was driven from the field by the Judæo-Christian and afterwards the Islamic development of the West, and it made no way in remoter Asia. Still, it has variously influenced the Western group of religions ; and it is represented in India by the Parsis, who are descendants of refugees from the Mohammedan persecution in the native home of the faith. Above all, it is interesting as the earliest form of a "revealed religion," claiming to go back to a personal teacher. And its kinship is with the religions of the West in so far as it is at once monotheistic and ethical.

While its origins in detail are extremely obscure, there is fortunately no need to enter into controverted questions. For my present purpose, the undisputed facts will suffice. The native source for the tradition is the sacred book, the Avesta, which dates from the new Persian

kingdom of the Sassanidæ, founded near the beginning of the third century of the Christian era. Portions of this are by most scholars held to be considerably older, some reaching back to the time of the Achæmenidæ. But the empire and dynasty of the Achæmenidæ came to an end in 330 B.C.; and in the long interval between Alexander's conquests and the rise of the new theocratic State the religion had passed into obscurity, so that great caution is clearly necessary in determining what are the older portions of the stratification. For the earlier stages, however, there are the monuments left by the Achæmenid emperors, and there are the extant records of the Greeks. These begin with the account given by Herodotus in the latter part of the fifth century. Herodotus knows the religion as that which was held by a priesthood, the Magians, but does not mention the name of the teacher, Zoroaster. He knows and sympathises with its rejection of all images. Its monotheistic character is evident from the inscriptions of Darius I. (521–485 B.C.), who declares himself a worshipper of the good divinity, Ahura-Mazda (Ormuzd). References to the distinctive feature of the Zoroastrian religion, its dualism, not metaphysical but ethical, by which a chief of the evil powers of the universe was set against the good divinity, do not appear in Greek literature till the fourth century. And then also the name of Zoroaster appears. On the date of Zoroaster the native tradition is extremely modest, not

requiring that his activity should be earlier than the sixth century B.C. The name of the king who supported him in his reforms has been identified with Hystaspes, the father of Darius, but the details regarding the legendary and the historical characters do not agree. Whether Zoroaster ever existed is a matter of disagreement among competent scholars; but this is unimportant, since it is generally allowed that the whole elaboration of the law ascribed in the sacred book to a communication from the divinity to Zoroaster was the work of the priesthood.

To see how the explanation I have already stated is applicable in view of these facts, it must be recalled who the Persians were. Usually they are associated with the Medes, who were also Aryans, and who come on the historical scene a little earlier. Now the Median monarchy can only be traced historically to about the middle of the seventh century. About a century later, Cyrus, King of the mountain-land of Persis, made himself master of both the kindred nations, and, at their head, subjugated all Western Asia. Egypt was conquered in 525 B.C. by his son Cambyses; and the empire was organised and somewhat extended by Darius, the son of Hystaspes. Thus the Medes and Persians appear as conquering tribes superimposing themselves on extremely old civilisations. Equal in natural intelligence to their subjects and more vigorous, they were at a stage of relative simplicity of life and thought, but flexible and ready to learn from their predecessors. They

brought with them a belief in gods whose names are etymologically related to the Vedic gods of the Aryan conquerors of India. At the early stage, we may suppose that, like the oldest Romans, they had no statues of the gods ; and we may attribute this merely to want of any sufficient growth of the arts. Given these historical conditions, I think the general features of the Magian or Zoroastrian religion can be deduced.

For these are precisely the conditions under which the esoteric monotheism arrived at already within the ancient hierarchies could start on a career of its own. And this career, among the Medes and Persians, would necessarily be distinctively religious. They had not the arts, the politics, and the humanistic literature of Greece, which kept religious interests within bounds ; nor had they the scientific and philosophical schools. The higher theology of the old priesthoods, therefore, could be turned by the Magians without serious hindrance to the purpose of reforming religion. The reform, traditionally ascribed to Zoroaster, I take to have consisted in the ordering of morally selected ritual and myth under the monotheistic idea. This idea was taken up by an intelligent and relatively unpreoccupied priestly class, supported no doubt by royal authority, which at this stage had an interest in a relatively simple and rational religion, disentangling it from the network of old custom and the etiquette of caste. We must also take into account, as in the case of the Greek theology,

that there has now been much contact between empires and peoples. Thus the esoteric speculations of Egypt and Chaldæa, when they met, naturally took this form, that the one God who was lord of all was the God of all races, did not speak a particular language, and must not be envisaged in a particular figure. The idea of a local god, in fact, was beginning to appear absurd. It is this absurdity that is brought out when Aristophanes introduces the Thracian god Triballus speaking broken Greek and wearing his cloak the wrong way. Yet only philosophical monotheism (if even this) could be quite pure. For a religion that was to be popular there must be some embodiment. The Magians fulfilled this condition by imaginatively representing the supreme lord of the universe as a celestial monarch surrounded by subordinate deities. These are not yet as reduced in rank as are the "angels" of the religions that started from Judaism, but the system is essentially of the same kind. The names both of the supreme God and of his surrounding spirits were, of course, those of old Aryan divinities. Ormuzd, however, was thought of as unquestionably the God of all, and images of the divinity were now definitely rejected. Here the state of culture of an intelligent race not artistically developed was precisely adapted to realise in practice the spiritualised theology reached by the few in the ancient civilisations. The structure of the religions of Babylonia and Egypt, with their sculptured and pictured

imagery, was too complex to be transformed, and could only decay as belief ceased to be possible; but the insight reached by their speculative minds could pass over to their successors.

We have seen already how the process can be understood as going on in Greece. Here pure monotheism produced its effect entirely through philosophy; with the result that a kind of ethical theism consistent with belief in one God, but not laying great stress on the divine unity as a dogma, became semi-official. The art of statuary, based essentially on polytheism and now highly developed, of course no man of culture could desire to interfere with; and compromises in thought, as has been found in later religions, were very easy. Even if the philosophers had wished ever so much to revolutionise popular religion in its external expression, they could nowhere have procured to themselves the authority to do this. In Persia, the different conditions explain the difference. Placed among the older peoples of Asia, itself under an absolute monarchy, and looking to religion for the direction of life, the Persian nation had still the docility to receive the teachings offered by an authoritative corporation as those of a divinely inspired prophet and revealer. Greece, indeed, had only transcended this stage for a time[1]; and the Western

[1] How easily some could imagine that it was transcended once for all may be seen from the saying of one philosopher about another as recorded in Diogenes Laertius. Menedemus said of Bion that in "running down" the prophets or diviners he was slaying the dead: Βίωνος τε ἐπιμελῶς κατατρέχοντος τῶν μάντεων, νεκροὺς αὐτὸν ἐπισφάττειν ἔλεγε (ii. 135).

world was to return for centuries to a type having in it more of Asia than of Athens.

The dualism of the Persian religion has been thought to have its source in some mythological conflict among the Aryan divinities; but, as this is much disputed, and does not bear on the general thesis, I leave the question aside. In any case, its dualism is a very distinctive feature of the Zoroastrian faith. The good divinity is opposed by Ahriman, the chief of the evil spirits, who form around him an infernal court opposed to the celestial court of Ormuzd. The arch-fiend is himself a creator, and uses his power to contaminate the creation of Ormuzd. Noxious animals, for example, are produced by him; hence it is a religious duty to destroy them. Marauding barbarian nomads also were looked upon as servants of the evil one. Thus the religion has a strongly practical character, making duty centre in productive activity and opposition to the destructive agencies in the world. It is not only a religion of activity but of optimism. At the end of the ages there is to be a conflict in which Ahriman will be finally overthrown; for the powers of good and evil in the universe are not coequal. To present them as ultimate and inexpugnable (though separable) metaphysical elements seems to have been characteristic of the Manichæan "heresy"; and this arose under the influence of Christian Gnosticism.

The religion in its older form was well adapted

to be that of a conquering and, in its degree, civilising empire. Officially it was tolerant in so far as the kings recognised and supported by gifts the religions of willing subjects. Yet I think we must not wholly set aside the testimony of ancient literature to occasional acts of intolerance. The Greeks had no prepossessions as to what was to be expected from a religion regarding itself as revealed and claiming universality; and they have put on record acts which they and the Romans came to interpret in the end as due to religious disapproval of temples containing images and of cults like the animal-worship of Egypt. The testimony to the facts begins with Æschylus, a contemporary, and proceeds through Herodotus and Isocrates, till at length we find the cause given by Cicero, who explains it, not as wanton iconoclasm, but as iconoclasm with the motive of religion. Of course, if the kings of Persia were to hold together an empire at all on their principle of favouring local autonomy, they had to recognise in some measure the religions of their subjects or vassals; and they seem to have been able to do this consistently with their belief in Ormuzd as the supreme God. Yet they held that they themselves were possessors of religious truth in a higher degree of purity. Thus, if opposed, they had no longer a motive for refraining from acts of contemptuous destruction. That these cannot have been very numerous or extensive has been shown by Professor Eduard Meyer from the evidence of the monuments, which directly

prove that the general policy was one of toleration. Yet he himself recognises the other side in admitting that Cambyses "plundered temples, derided the gods, wounded Apis," though officially he came forward as legitimate successor of the native dynasties.[1]

With the Greeks and Romans tolerance was differently based, and was more successful with polytheists, but broke down at another point. They did not regard their own religions as containing any higher truth, but as on an equality with the rest. They merely preferred them for their own countries, and did not desire the entrance of others. Anything dangerous to the order of the State was of course to be repelled. If they believed in any higher truth, it was in that of philosophy. Quite consistently, outward deference could be paid to all religions,[2] unless there was some ethical or political ground of disapproval. Thus the Hellenised Macedonians, and afterwards the Romans, could govern any nation except the Jews. For a Jew held precisely the belief they could not understand, namely, that his own religion was true and all the others false. Now this throws interesting light on the precisely opposite failure and success of the Persians. Under them polytheistic Egypt again and again revolted, with Greek aid regaining its indepen-

[1] *Geschichte des Alterthums*, iii. § 101: "Zwar hat Kambyses die Tempel geplündert, die Götter verhöhnt, den Apis verwundet, aber officiell ist er in Ægypten als legitimer Nachfolger der Pharaonen aufgetreten, wie in Babylon als der Nebuchadnezars."

[2] This applies to public men. A private man—say, a Cynic or Cyrenaic philosopher—did not need to pay deference to any.

dence for a considerable time. Babylon also rebelled, apparently from some religious grievance. On the other hand, the Jews claim to have been specially favoured by the Persian rulers, and the attitude in the Bible is one practically of uniform friendliness to Persia.[1] From this I argue that there was some understood kinship of aim between the Magian and the Jewish priesthoods. It seems very probable that the establishment of a local religion on monotheistic lines was actually favoured and supported, not merely tolerated, by the Persian government, as the Jewish Scriptures relate that it was.

The time, we must remember, had not yet come of mutually hostile revealed religions with detailed dogmas set in array. These religions, if I am right in my general contention, were in the inchoate stage. The priestly class among the Jews, especially those who were living in exile in Babylonia when the Persian conquest liberated them, were just coming, like the Magians, under the influence of the generalised monotheism that had now spread abroad in Western Asia. They, too, were relatively unpreoccupied. They had never had any but rude images of their tribal god, and their local cults had been in great part put an end to in the Assyrian and Babylonian plundering expeditions. Being Semites, of high natural intelligence and assimilative power, they too were able, under the given conditions, to

[1] If the Jews revolted, as they are said to have done, under Artaxerxes Ochus, near the end of the Achæmenid dynasty, the cause was in the tyranny felt by all his subjects alike.

form the idea of a more spiritual religion, monotheistic and with no representation of the divinity, but only with a cult and a legal code. For object of religious worship, to be identified with the one God of the universe, they naturally selected their tribal deity, Jahveh, as the Magians had selected the old Aryan divinity Ahura-Mazda; but the two priesthoods were still near enough the source to feel a sense of community rather than hostility, especially as they were in a world of polytheists and their spheres of influence lay wide apart. Hence an understanding could be arranged, through the royal power, such as would have been, of course, quite impossible between later Jewry with its canonical Scriptures and the new Persian theocratic State of the Sassanidæ with its own sacred Avesta.

Hitherto, I think, the deductive synthesis has amounted simply to a retrospective explanation of the facts as generalised by historians without serious disagreement. I now come to a point where, if accepted, it will enable us to decide in favour of one system of generalisations as against the others. That system, as I have admitted, is at present adopted only by a minority of scholars. In the rest of the present chapter, therefore, I shall try to clear away some prepossessions against it resting on fancied knowledge. The next chapter will contain the positive theory. But first, it is worth while to point out one or two relatively conservative results of the position attained.

Among the best-known works of the radical criticism of the Bible by Dutch theologians is the study of W. H. Kosters entitled *The Restoration of Israel in the Persian Period.*[1] Here the attempt is made to show that the supposition of an important return of exiles under Cyrus is unnecessary. In fact, the "post-exilic" Church-State of the Jews was built up with little assistance by the men of Jerusalem and the surrounding territory. The small groups from the Babylonian colony who actually returned came only later with Ezra and Nehemiah, and the importance of their activity has been exaggerated. This criticism was carried a step further by C. C. Torrey, who contends that "Ezra, the priest, the scribe," is a fictitious personage created by the author of the Books of Chronicles, who is generally allowed to have compiled the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah as they stand.[2] "The story of Ezra," he says, "is the Chronicler's masterpiece"[3]; though he accepts portions of the Biblical record as containing authentic memoirs of Nehemiah.[4] Now of course it was easy to prove that the record as it stands cannot be precisely historical. Kosters did not even need the law of causation, but only the law of contradiction, to show how "the pragmatism of the sacred historian" has affected

[1] *Het Herstel van Israël in het Perzische Tijdvak.* Eene Studie van Dr. W. H. Kosters, 1894.

[2] *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah,* by Dr. Charles C. Torrey, Instructor in the Semitic Languages at Andover Theological Seminary. Published in *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft,* ii. 1896.

[3] P. 57. [4] P. 2.

the details. Reconstruction, however, is a different matter; and here, I think, to account for the result, something nearer the tradition is necessary. Torrey may be right in denying the historical existence of Ezra; and, doubtless, there is no reason to suppose long processions of exiles by which Judæa was repeopled in the time of Cyrus. As Édouard Dujardin observes in a work to which I shall have to return,[1] the descendants of those who had been deported fifty years before Cyrus captured Babylon (538 B.C.) would by then have formed a permanent colony. Yet, as he also recognises,[2] intercommunications between Babylon and Jerusalem furnished the Babylonian basis of Jewish culture. On the theory which I am now setting forth, they were also needed to initiate the Church-State. And, in general, the spirit of the transactions as recorded in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah corresponds to what we should expect on the theory. That is to say, we need not suppose that the permission to return given by the Persian emperors or their support of the new order was more grudging or difficult or delayed than is implied in the documents. The position given to Cyrus as a sort of Messiah may very well have had its basis in the recollections of the people.

The other point where an approximation to tradition seems to me needed relates to the Covenant or Pact between the Jewish people and

[1] *La Source du Fleuve Chrétien*: Histoire Critique du Judaïsme ancien et du Christianisme primitif. i. Le Judaïsme, 1906.

[2] Pp. 372–373.

its God. On the view that the religion of the Jews was a revolutionary construction, it seems necessary to suppose that assemblies, much like those reported in Ezra and Nehemiah, accepted the new order by their voices. Members of the Jewish priestly class at Babylon had assimilated the idea of the universal God without visible form ; and, with the sympathetic support of the kings of Persia and the reforming Magi under whose inspiration these were acting, they returned to realise the idea in their native community. The old " pre-exilic " cult having been reduced to disorganised vestiges, they might hope to build up a new order corresponding to their aspirations ; but for success popular assent was necessary. For there was no king descended from the ancient line, and no nobility but the priesthood. The hypothesis, in that part of the world and at that stage of history, of course would be that they were restoring an old law. Thus was realised, in a peculiar manner, the theory of the " social compact," which does in reality find some kind of outward expression on such revolutionary occasions. Hence Hobbes was able to manipulate the Biblical documents in favour of his own form of contract-theory, without fundamentally doing violence to the record on the political side : for the Pact is in truth there. And I see no difficulty in supposing that what originally brought it there was some real transaction of swearing allegiance to the god, represented by the high priest or the priestly class. That the real transaction, what-

ever it may have been, was afterwards thrown back into a far past and duplicated and disguised out of recognition is admitted by all the critics who are not absolutely traditionalists.[1]

But here arises the question, why set aside the views of traditionalists as such, especially when a return at some points to tradition is forced upon us? Why recur for explanatory theory, as distinguished from bare facts, only to "independent" critics, whether called "higher" or not? The answer can be given, and in such a way as to destroy all presumption, not only in favour of simply accepting the traditional account, but against re-examining the positions of the "higher criticism" itself.

In speaking of the Avesta, it was assumed that the sacred book of an Oriental priesthood cannot be taken on trust without examination as being what it purports to be. That is to say, it cannot be taken simply as the revelation of a god or gods, at such and such dates, to inspired teachers. To test its claims to antiquity, philology and comparison with known history are indispensable. But, it may be asked by one pushing scepticism to extremes, what after all is "known history"? Is not every history that is known more or less mixed with falsehood and fable, written from more or less partisan points of view, and so

1 In support of my general view, I might have pressed into service what is put on record by Diogenes Laertius (Proœmium, 9, cited by Th. Reinach, *Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au Judaïsme*, pp. 178–179), that some authorities make the Jews descend from the Magi; but to lay much stress on this, I am afraid, would be arbitrary. So many conjectures were hazarded.

forth ? This must be conceded ; but, in the end, the essential substance of it, the thread that carries humanity from age to age as the thread of memory carries the individual from one period of life to another,[1] remains verifiable. For it is continuous with that which now exists. We have around us the kinds of information of which "profane history"—that is to say, history that has been left open to doubt and criticism—is made up. According as we are more or less impartial, we can allow for the perturbing influences that we know to exist in the present. Such are: suppressions or exaggerations of facts in a national or party interest ; personal bias, producing credulity or incredulity as the case may be ; and generally the weaknesses of human memory and imagination. None of these, however, is destructive of the very nature of evidence. And, if we go back to early modern times, to the Middle Ages, to classical antiquity, to Oriental antiquity several millennia before the Christian era, the thread becomes thin sometimes, but it is never broken. The information that is for dates the most authentic of all—that of official documents—goes back furthest. This may be called the real thread of events. A fictitious narrative, in contrast, runs on what we may call an imaginary thread. Now a "sacred history" is an account of events which it is desired, and even required, by the teachers of certain

1 The description of history as the memory of Humanity occurs in Schopenhauer ; and this is the more interesting because he attached so little philosophical significance to history.

dogmas that the believers in their teaching should accept. If it cannot at any point be brought into relation with events joined by the real thread, it may be merely an imaginative story, not indeed for entertainment, but for edification. To learn its evidential value, we must try to find points of contact between the history in which faith has been required, sometimes under penalties, and the history that has been open to tests.[1] When we find slight points of contact for a certain distance, and then absolute silence on all sides except in the sacred book, are we not justified in considering it merely an affair of conjecture to determine whether anything happened at all, or all is fable with a didactic purpose ?

It may be granted that this test has sometimes been applied too roughly to sacred books, with the result that the chance of finding the attainable grains of truth has been lost. When open doubt or disbelief was not permitted, the obvious method of those who wished to invalidate the authority of the books was to insinuate that they were the work of interested deceivers. The " higher critics " of the nineteenth century have proceeded more delicately. Trained as theologians, they began by accepting the tradition ; but, finding it on close scrutiny more and more incoherent, they were driven back to the non-supernaturalism

1 Paley attempted this method quite fairly at the beginning of his *Evidences of Christianity*. With his scientific cast of mind, he perceived what were the conditions of proof. I suppose that, as Sir Leslie Stephen once put it, there is general agreement that on the terms accepted by the old " evidential " apologists, as by their opponents, the case of tradition would now be hopeless.

of precursors who had been more influenced by *a priori* philosophical points of view. Inferior for the most part to these in width of mind, they had the advantage over them in specialist knowledge, and they lived at a time when the idea of historical evolution was, as we say, "in the air." Thus the result of their collective activity has been a considerable gain in insight. In the case of the Hebrew Scriptures the great generalised result of the higher criticism is that the method of the sacred writers was to throw their ideal into the past, and that each new "redactor" of a document rewrote it from his own point of view till the canon was fixed. Still, the assumption has usually remained, except in the case of obvious myths, that the original narrative must have been history and not romance. This may or may not be so in particular cases; but does it not seem likely that the critics from within, starting with theological prepossessions and never ceasing to read the Bible in a devotional spirit, have never gained a view so detached as that of critics occupied chiefly with other studies? These, in spite of their less intimate knowledge, may, if they return to the subject with a serious desire to discover the truth, succeed in hitting upon points missed by the experts.

Let us then, in order to clear the ground, try for a moment the method of approach from without, and ask what we really know of the antecedents of the Jews and of the Old Testament from other sources than themselves. The answer

is, very little. Probably, as in the case of the earliest Christianity, very few know how little it amounts to. Before the ninth century B.C. there is no incontestable reference to either of the "Israelitish" kingdoms whose annals are related in the canonical Books of Kings. On the Assyrian monuments for the ninth century, the northern kingdom is mentioned as the "Kingdom of Omri" (the father of Ahab); and this title remains after the dynasty, according to the Biblical narrative, has been changed. Nothing in any reference that has been discovered indicates anything in the old Palestinian kingdoms distinctive of Judaism as known from its sacred book. The name of the tribal god, on the Moabite stone (attributed to the same century), is no exception; for other tribes also had their own god. On turning to the references in Greek writers, as given in the collection of Théodore Reinach,[1] we find that, instructive as they are in many ways for the later period, they furnish us with no contemporary evidence before the time of Alexander. Herodotus, it is true, speaks of the "Syrians of Palestine" and their rite of circumcision, and says that, according to their own acknowledgment, they borrowed it from the Egyptians. From this M. Reinach argues that the reference of Herodotus is to the Philistines, who by that time may have adopted it, and not to the Jews, whose sacred legend gives a different

[1] *Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au Judaïsme*, réunis, traduits et annotés par Théodore Reinach, 1895.

account of the origin of the rite. If, however, the legend was not then formed, and the cult was only in its tentative stage, the passage may, after all, refer to the Jews; but clearly it tells us nothing about Judaism, to which the rite was not peculiar. To the distinctive religion of the Jews there is no reference for more than a century after Herodotus.

From about the opening of the third century B.C., there are references in Greek writers that show knowledge of the Jewish law; but the early ones at least, from their inaccuracy, are thought to be indirect. As knowledge becomes fuller, the Greek and after them the Roman writers adopt the method, which is still to a considerable extent that of modern Orientalists, of inserting in their historical summaries renderings of the Biblical legends more or less rationalised by omission of miracles. If their bias is hostile, they take up stories obviously invented by Egyptians[1] as a reply to the Hebrew story of the exodus. According to an admittedly forged document, known as the letter of Pseudo-Aristeas, current in Palestine in the time of Josephus,[2] the Pentateuch was translated from Hebrew into Greek during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285–247 B.C.); but most authorities think this too early. The Septuagint, as the whole Greek Bible came to be called from the fable about the seventy or seventy-two translators of the Penta-

[1] That is, of course, late Egyptians who wrote in Greek.
[2] Generally admitted, however, to date from about 200 B.C.

teuch, was not completed till much later. As Dr. H. B. Swete, the orthodox authority from whom I take this, decisively points out,[1] the letter of Aristeas refers only to the Law : " His silence as to the Prophets and the Hagiographa is entirely consistent with the conditions of the period in which he fixes his story. The canon of the Prophets seems scarcely to have reached completion before the High-Priesthood of Simon II. (219–199 B.C.). If this was so in Palestine, at Alexandria certainly there would be no recognised body of prophetic writings in the reign of the second Ptolemy. The Torah alone was ready for translation, for it was complete, and its position as a collection of sacred books was absolutely secure."

We, of course, still possess the Septuagint, which was almost exclusively used by the early Christians. Of the Hebrew text, the existing form was fixed by Jewish doctors late in the Christian era ; so that the Septuagint represents an older text.[2] By the conjectured date of the first part of this (probably late in the third century), or better by the references in Greek writers to the Jewish State and religion, we are enabled to fix the date at which the written Law, in some form, must have existed ; and this is early in the third century B.C. So far as external testimony goes, the rest of the books may be supposed to be later. No one, indeed, brings

[1] *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (1902), p. 23.
[2] More accurately, its different forms represent different texts.

down the whole composition to the very lowest dates rigorously permissible by the external evidence ; but it is well to remember the general rule suggested for ecclesiastical documents even by rather conservative critics—that their composition is usually not very much earlier than the date when they are first put forth as authoritative. This need not be applied to all the literary material in them; some of which may be older, as again some may be interpolated.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE JEWISH LAW AND THE PROPHETS

In setting forth what I should like to call the revised theory regarding the dates and origin of the Law and the Prophets, I shall not, of course, attempt to prove the case over again from the empirical side. What I propose is to show how the positions already attained both empirically and deductively form a coherent system in relation to the general thesis which I uphold.

It may be well at this point to turn back and run rapidly through the historical phases by which criticism of the Bible has reached its present stage. This will show that the "higher criticism" does not stand by itself as a unique effort to penetrate beneath the tradition. We may begin with the second century of the Christian era, when the propaganda of a religion claiming the succession to Judaism first seriously threatened the imposition of a sacred book on the European intellect. Celsus, the Platonic philosopher who under Marcus Aurelius stated the case with high ability against both the Jewish and the Christian claims, has been compared to Voltaire and the

Encyclopædists.[1] He was not obliged to mask his attack; but his aims, like theirs, were primarily destructive in view of a practical problem. We have in one case the opening, in the other not the close, but the intensest crisis, of the struggle between an essentially laic ideal and militant or triumphant theocracy. At this stage we get, as might be expected, a damaging attack from the point of view of critical common sense, but not a serious effort to find out by painstaking examination what could be known of the Jewish people and the development of its religion. The first real precursor of the "higher criticism," if this is what we are to understand by it, was the Neo-Platonist Porphyry. Of his fifteen books against the Christians very small fragments have been preserved, but one of his results was in the long run of great importance. He it was who first determined the true date and nature of the Book of Daniel, assigning it to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (second century B.C.). This position of his, being known and much discussed in the eighteenth century, passed on to the higher critics, and has been found unshakable ever since. In the much briefer treatise of the Emperor Julian, of which more is known through the survival of a portion of the reply by Cyril of Alexandria, the point of view is in curious formal coincidence with that of Hobbes and Spinoza

1 See Th. Reinach, *op. cit.*, p. 166, *n.*: "Nous ne donnons ici que quelques échantillons de l'exég se railleuse de Celse, qui, sur beaucoup de points, se montre le digne précurseur de Voltaire et des encyclopédistes."

thirteen centuries later. There is no question, as before or after, of making an end of the theocracy,[1] but only of limiting it. Judaism ought to be regarded as simply the religion, which is also the law, of a particular nation. Its documents furnish no basis for the universal dominion of ecclesiastics, whose activities ought to be severely restricted to their own communities and kept out of the life of the State and its education. In the seventeenth century the prescriptive claims of the clerical corporations to direct the civil State required, besides a new exegesis, incidentally some attempt at a rationalising account of Jewish origins; yet even Spinoza, with his skill in Hebrew learning, was unable to proceed far towards positive explanation. The English Deists in the eighteenth century continue Hobbes and Spinoza; but on the whole do not go much beyond conjectures as to how something like what is recorded in the Bible may have happened, with exclusion of miracles. What is most distinctively called the "higher criticism" consists of the work of those who, beginning with the French physician Astruc in the middle of the eighteenth century, first proved the composite origin of the "Mosaic" books, and then set themselves on this basis to reconstruct Hebrew history. The criticism is called higher because, while it is cultivated by experts in the ordinary or "textual" criticism, it goes

[1] *Écrasez l'Infâme* might have been the motto of Celsus as of Voltaire.

beyond it, aiming not merely at accurate reconstitution of the texts, but at showing their true literary and historical relationships. As a matter of fact, much of the kind of work could be done, and has been done, without knowledge of Hebrew. And, if the critical revision is right, the aims of the experts who first called themselves higher critics have been too ambitious. As regards reconstruction, we shall have to be more modest.[1] We cannot hope ever to know anything circumstantial about Hebrew history before the Persian period. Yet we must not forget the one clear gain already referred to. The higher criticism was worked out during the dominance of evolutionary ideas and bears their impress; and whether the stratification of the Hebrew Bible is of seven or eight or only of three centuries, we know that we must look for changes in the outlook of the writers from age to age and for causes of those changes.

Now the school of Wellhausen, which is on the whole the culmination of the higher criticism, after which its complexities become baffling, was able to give what seemed a plausible explanation of the development of Hebrew religion. It recognised that the Books of Moses, as they stand, are a late compilation. The earliest portions of them, however, were assigned to the ninth century, when the national literature was supposed to have begun. It began with the collection of

1 Textual criticism, too, as Spinoza showed from the nature of the literary tradition, if it keeps within the limits of sobriety, cannot go far. There can be no question of rewriting the text.

legends, speculations about origins, and so forth. Nothing before the Book of Judges contains any vestige of genuine national history. At least this is so according to Eduard Meyer, who is not an ultra-radical critic, but has, on some points, taken the conservative side very strongly against Wellhausen. The Hebrews are conjectured to have been an Arab tribe who conquered a portion of Palestine about the twelfth century B.C. The patriarchal anarchy represented in the Book of Judges is a vague reminiscence of the state of things in the eleventh century. The founder of the national monarchy was Saul, who may have been preceded by the Abimelech of Judges. He did not, however, establish a permanent dynasty. This was achieved by David, who left the kingdom to his son Solomon. The kingdom of Solomon broke up, as described in the Bible, into a northern and a southern portion. These kingdoms, known as Ephraim (or "Israel") and Judah, came to an end in the manner described in the Books of Kings, the northern monarchy being destroyed by the Assyrians in 722, and the southern by the Babylonians in 588 B.C. As was the custom in the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, the chiefs of the people were deported in order to break up the rebellious nationalities. During the period of formed national life before the exile, however, an important religious movement had begun. The Hebrews had all along worshipped a tribal god, Jahveh; but they had images of him, they

recognised the existence of other gods, and their cult was decidedly of a barbaric type. Human sacrifices and religious prostitution were authorised parts of it. The beginnings of what afterwards became distinctively Judaism date from the eighth century, when certain prophets arose who denounced these practices and preached a religion in which Jahveh became a purely ethical divinity, not to be worshipped under the form of images, and asking for no sacrifice except the will to obey a moral law. This, according to their preaching, had always been his character. Israel (a collective name including both kingdoms) was his people, and, having sinned, would be punished by captivity to other nations. Some critics hold that the ancient prophets also predicted the restoration, which afterwards came about through the Persian conquest of Babylonia; but this is not the general view. The usual critical position is that only fragments were preserved of the prophecies actually written or spoken by Amos and Hosea in the northern and by Isaiah in the southern kingdom. The prophetic books as we have them are, like the law-book of which the distinctive origins were later, a stratification, finally redacted by scribes. The composition of the Book of Isaiah as it stands may have extended over six centuries, from the eighth to the second. In any case, the result of the prophetic movement was a reform in which the priests of Jerusalem, influenced by the prophets, were allowed a directing part. Through

a series of stages, still to be detected in the Pentateuch and the other narrative books, the religion was brought into the form of historic Judaism. The Book of Deuteronomy represents a comparatively early phase, in which the ethical monotheism of the prophets is uppermost. It was actually found in the Temple as described in the Bible,[1] having been placed there by the priests with a view to its being passed off on the king as the book of the great lawgiver Moses.[2] Although King Josiah adopted the reforms,[3] the kingdom nevertheless came to an end a little after his time; but the religious ideal was now fixed and was cherished all through the Babylonian captivity. At the restoration the priests were able to take the government of Judæa into their own hands, and from that time they set themselves to elaborate the "Law of Moses" in greater detail. The final product of this elaboration was the Levitical Code, in which the pure religion of the prophets tends to be lost sight of under a sacrificial cult. From each new point of view as it emerged the older portions of the books were worked over for religious edification. In one particular case we

1 2 Kings xxii., xxiii.

2 The newer critics, to be spoken of presently, regard the whole account as a legend, not as the story of a deception in which the idea of the broken pact had its origin; though all agree that the book intended in the narrative was Deuteronomy.

3 If a great reform really dated from Josiah, it is strange that there should proceed from Jeremiah, a prophet who is said to have flourished in his reign (Jer. i. 2), the sentence, most vividly rendered by the Vulgate: "*A prophetis enim Jerusalem egressa est pollutio super omnem terram*" (xxiii. 15).

can see before our eyes the sacerdotal decadence in which this at length ended. The Books of Kings, manipulated as even they are, are still full of humanly interesting, if only partly historical, elements. The Chronicler, who took them for his material, has left nothing but what interested him from the point of view of the Temple-cult and the priestly organisation.

Plausible as this general view has long seemed, much of it was clearly very hazardous. How is the correctness of the ecclesiastical ascriptions guaranteed in the case of the Prophets any more than of Moses ? Large portions of them, besides, have to be abandoned as interpolations, and often these are the finest poetical passages. Where did the prophetic reforms find a point of contact if nothing lay behind them but a primitive barbarian cult ? Granted even Renan's "monotheistic instinct of the Semitic race" or Matthew Arnold's "genius of Israel for righteousness," what external causes evoked the innate dispositions ? Something of the kind there must have been. How is it that the prophetic books convey spontaneously the impression of spiritual advance and wider outlook as compared with the Law ? Many, I think, who have taken the higher criticism for a new revelation, partly through confidence in experts, must have been half-conscious of such lurking objections. The want of tangible facts outside the documents, as we have seen, reduces all theories in great part to conjecture. We need not, therefore, stand in excessive awe

of the majority of critics. Only a little courage seems required in order to consent to re-examine questions which, after all, no one ever thought were finally closed.

Some portions of the conjectural account the later critics retain. And it is worth mentioning that Spinoza, in 1670, had placed Deuteronomy before the other Books of Moses, and Chronicles last of all in order of composition and apart from the preceding historical books. The composition of Deuteronomy and the compilation of the rest with the exception of Chronicles, he conjectured, were due to Ezra after the return from the captivity. No one, however, now assigns so important a part to Ezra. Where the recent school of French critics has made a new departure is (to neglect minor details) in placing the beginnings of prophecy after, instead of before, the Law. This, as they note, is a return to tradition ; but on the other side, the date they assign to the completion of the Law itself is as late as that assigned by their German predecessors. On their view, no "pre-exilic" literature whatever has come down to us. Deuteronomy, though the earliest part of the Law, dates, not from the seventh, but from the fourth century B.C. For nothing was written till the cult had received its first organisation, and this probably took the whole of the fifth century. Those who wrote the sacred history after the constitution of the Jewish Church-State under the Persians possessed, indeed, some meagre archives of the old kingdoms of Ephraim and

Judah; but that was all.[1] For the rest, by drawing on the myths and legends diffused through Palestine, they by degrees composed an epic of a national past that had never existed. The Church-State was a new thing, and had properly no past; but the doctoral and the artistic spirit of its writers together produced a literature essentially harmonious for all its discrepancies of detail. The prophetic writings, like the Books of Moses, are wholly pseudepigraphic and are of later origin. After the Law had been in considerable part written came an influx of Hellenism. This began from the time of Alexander or a little before (say from 350 B.C.), and grew stronger in the reigns of his successors. The prophetic movement was a reaction against it. On the model of the popular "man of God" or village thaumaturge, known in Palestine as throughout the East, the poetic writers who actually composed the books of prophecy imagined great figures in the past who had denounced judgment against the people and its kings for

[1] How inexact as well as meagre these outlines must have been we may see from a confession of Maspero, *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient*, 8th ed., 1909, p. 465. Usually he tries to bring in the Biblical data as part of the authentic chronicle; yet, in speaking of the reign of the Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser III., which comes precisely at one of those turning-points where we should expect real information from the annals of the little kingdoms whose fate now became involved in the general movement of Oriental history, he has to give up all attempt to reconcile the Hebrew narratives with the data of the monuments. And in a note he adds: "Je sacrifierai les données chronologiques du récit biblique au témoignage des monuments contemporains." In the same note he cites from a letter of St. Jerome a strangely candid admission as to the irreconcilable discrepancies between the numerical data in the annals of Israel and of Judah. What then must we think where there is no possibility of verification or comparison?

apostasy from the pact of Israel with Jahveh, and promised a return of favour on amendment. They were, in a certain degree, anti-sacerdotalists, declaiming in a puritan spirit against the ceremonial cult as well as against the luxury, oppression, and Hellenising tendencies, which they called "idolatry," of the ruling hierarchs. The idols which they accused Israel of following were nominally those of the dead cults of semi-barbarous Palestinian tribes, but really the statues of invading Hellenic art. In like manner Babylon and Assyria and Egypt were symbolic names for the kingdoms of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. The symbolism, however, was general and poetic, not prosaically literal ; the poets threw themselves into the imaginary past of the half-legendary history, and only glanced by allusions at the present. The prophetic movement conquered in so far as Jewish nationality was preserved by the preservation of its religion ; but its puritan side was met by a new growth of sacerdotalism. When Jerusalem had expelled the movement that would have overwhelmed its distinctive genius, the system established was not precisely that of Deuteronomy, with its relatively simple code, which was the ideal of the great prophets, but the full Levitical legislation as it appears in what the newer agree with the older critics in regarding as the latest portions of the Pentateuch.

This account of the new or revised criticism follows M. Dujardin, its latest representative. He was preceded by M. Maurice Vernes, and the

pioneer of the movement was Ernest Havet in his extensive treatise, *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*. Of this work the first two volumes deal with the Hellenic preparation for Christianity; in the third (1878) Judaism is dealt with; in the fourth (1884) the New Testament. Havet was not, like his successors, a Hebraist, but he had gained high distinction as a classical scholar. Thus, when he came to deal with Judaism, he approached it from a more detached point of view than is usual with Biblical critics. What struck him most in the Bible was its "modern" character, by which I think we may understand such a degree of community with the West that it could take its place among the competing forces. The Pentateuch, as he put it, was "a book of propaganda from the first."[1] More especially he was impressed by the modernity of the prophetic writings.[2] Unfortunately he spoiled his case by trying to bring them down too late; and he gave up the sound critical positions already attained as regards the date of the Book of Daniel and the priority of Deuteronomy to the Levitical Code. M. Maurice Vernes, however, who reviewed his work from the point of view of a recognised expert in Biblical criticism, was open-minded enough to reconsider the positions he then held in common with the German and Dutch authorities on the Old Testament, and the result was a reversal of the order assigned

1 *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, vol. iii. p. 51: "Il n'aurait pas eu, je crois, le même succès, s'il eût été plus antique."

2 Compare his posthumous work, *La Modernité des Prophètes*, 1891.

by them to the Law and the Prophets. The Prophets he now assigned, on empirical grounds of exegesis, to the period between 350 and 200 B.C. The whole inductive proof is set forth in the two volumes entitled *Du prétendu Polythéisme des Hébreux* (1891).[1] M. Dujardin, coming later, has determined deductively the cause that explains this empirical order. The cause, we have seen, lies in the interactions between nationalist Judaism, already fixed in type by the priestly Law established under the Persian suzerainty, and the invading cosmopolitan Hellenism of the kingdoms ruled by the successors of Alexander. The great age of the prophets, therefore, is the third century B.C.

This deduction I have already accepted.[2] After the preceding chapter there is no further need to show that the newer views are perfectly compatible with all facts actually known about the documents. In reality they are simpler and depart less from the traditional order than those of the Germans. And, from the positive side, M. Dujardin's exposition certainly bears one mark of truth in the firm and ineffaceable impression it leaves. On returning to the subject from the point of view of general synthesis, however, it now seems to me that he has to some extent left out of sight one advance made through the cautiously inductive procedure of M. Vernes. There is a partial reversion to the search for a

[1] Published in the *Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études.*
[2] *The Origins of Christianity*, Preface to the second edition, 1909.

growth of the Jewish monotheism within the Bible itself. According to M. Dujardin, the priestly legislators of the fifth and fourth centuries seized on the idea that the tribal god was to be exclusively worshipped because this presented itself to them as the only available means of preserving the nationality of the people. By degrees, as ambition expanded, the tribal god became first the supreme God, to whom the gods of other nations are inferior, and then the sole God.[1] Now undoubtedly, whatever ideas borrowed from without we may find in Judaism, it must be allowed that these all became strongly nationalised. The imagination, for example, of the Messiah may have come, as Professor Gunkel maintains, from Babylonia; but as it appeared in the apocalypses nothing could be more Jewish. In the prophets, profoundly ethical as I cannot help thinking that their tone is in some ways, I am bound to concede to M. Dujardin that there is no genuine ethical universalism. For the ancient Hebrews, the neighbour, as Spinoza also said, is always only the Jew.[2] The "stranger" to whom regard is to be paid is only the Judaising stranger. In no Hebrew prophet is there any such declaration as that of Cicero, expressing the consciousness of humanity attained by the Græco-Roman world of his time, that those who limit the practice of the moral law to fellow citizens not only take away the basis of all human virtues, but are also

1 *La Source du Fleuve Chrétien*, pp. 253–254.

2 *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, xvii. 86: "Caritas erga proximum, hoc est, erga concivem."

to be judged impious towards the immortal gods.[1] The monotheism of the Jews, nevertheless, I agree with M. Vernes in finding, was universalist from the first. No doubt, as M. Dujardin has shown, the ambition of the propaganda grew as the contacts of the segregated nation with the outer world became more frequent; but there was no gradual growth of the tribal god into the sole God of the universe. The God of the post-exilic Jews—that is, as M. Vernes and M. Dujardin agree, of the only Jews known to history—was from the first the Creator of heaven and earth, who had chosen Israel for his peculiar people and the land of Canaan for his dwelling-place.[2] How this doctrine had come to be so rigorously affirmed M. Vernes does not undertake to decide, thinking the question premature at the time when he wrote. All that he insisted on was the impossibility of restoring from the Bible a pre-monotheistic stage of Hebrew religion. Hence the title of his work, which is meant to convey that the attempt to learn from the documents

1 *De Off.* iii. 6, 28: "Qui autem civium rationem dicunt habendam, externorum negant, ii dirimunt communem humani generis societatem; qua sublata beneficentia, liberalitas, bonitas, iustitia funditus tollitur; quæ qui tollunt, etiam adversus deos immortales impii iudicandi sunt."

2 *Du prétendu Polythéisme des Hébreux*, vol. ii., chap. viii., pp. 9–10: "Pour quiconque lit avec soin les livres de *Juges-Samuel-Rois*, il est clair que le Dieu dont leurs auteurs enseignent l'existence d'un bout à l'autre, est le Dieu créateur des cieux et de la terre qui, entre tous les peuples, a choisi le peuple d'Israël comme il a désigné le pays de Chanaan pour le séjour qu'il préfère à tous les autres. C'est une religion d'un caractère franchement universaliste, malgré une attache particulariste indéniable. C'est la doctrine du Judaïsme post-exilien, si admirablement exposée dans le *Deutéronome* et dans les écrits prophétiques et destinée à devenir, avec un léger changement, la doctrine chrétienne."

anything about an actual polytheism or "idolatry" of the ancient Hebrews is illusory. The whole Bible bears the mark of a doctrinal unity. Apparently polytheistic and anthropomorphic phrases are local colour or deliberate expression of an abstract idea by means of concrete language and imagery. Passages thought archaic, in which God appears under a human figure talking familiarly to some patriarch, are perhaps really the most modern, being consciously invented stories of the nature of the later Jewish "parables."[1] That these were already a trouble in antiquity to Hellenistic Jews as well as to Christians who had grown up under the influence of the Græco-Roman speculative theism is from this point of view easily explained. Those for whom the form of expression was chosen belonged to a different type of culture; they were the people of Palestine and not the students of Alexandria; but those who were writing for them may for all that have been doctors at the stage of the Talmudic Rabbis, or of the inventors of sacred stories under Islam, with its undeniable abstract monotheism.

It follows that the nationalist reactions traced out by M. Dujardin, while they were really the conditions under which the literary genius of the Hebrews manifested itself, do not suffice to explain the beginnings of the theology. That theology, fully possessed, as M. Vernes insists, by the doctors of Jerusalem from the traceable

1 *Loc. cit.*, p. 113: "On aura beau faire; on n'arrivera à comprendre quelque chose à la Bible, qu'en remettant en lumière les données théologiques que ses auteurs se sont proposé d'exprimer."

origins of the Church-State, was, I contend, the speculative monotheism that had emerged at the end of the long development of Western Asiatic and Egyptian civilisation. Seized on in the philosophic schools of Greece, it was formulated and reasoned out into pure theism or pantheism.[1] In Persia it furnished the starting-point for the first form of a "revealed religion"; but as this was to be the religion of a ruling race in an empire, it could not be very strongly nationalised. With the priests of the Jewish theocratic State, revealed or consciously constructed religion, under the contrasting conditions, took the intensely nationalised form we know. The modification needed in M. Dujardin's proposition is therefore, in my view, only this. Instead of saying that the God of the Jews became the God of the universe, we must say that the God of the universe, already conceived by the ancient priesthoods, was identified by a local priesthood with the god of a tribal cult. The process in Judæa was not that the national God was universalised, but that the God of the universe was nationalised. Then, placed on the borders of the East and the West, Jerusalem became the most powerful centre of propaganda ever known. After the national epic of the sacred history had been composed, the prophetic lyrists, rising from one height to another, at last predicted that the whole world

[1] It is curious to notice how Greek and Roman writers, coming in contact with Judaism and finding in it resemblances to a philosophic creed, tend to confound the transcendent God of the Jews with the "whole heaven" or universe.

would become Jewish; while the psalmists contributed a form of worship, consisting only of prayer and praise, which, though not elaborated to that end, could in the long run make the religion independent of priests and sacrifices. The attempt of a foreign overlord failed, as recorded in history,[1] to sweep away the aggressive and exclusive order in the interests of cosmopolitan Hellenic culture; though supported, and indeed first set in motion, by a section of the Jews themselves in revolt against the sombre religious nationalism of the "pious." After this came the successive apocalypses, Sibylline oracles, and so forth, predicting the end of all secular States and the dominance of God's people; till at length new races took up the succession, and the religion of the Jews, after all its hopes, was again left isolated in an alien world.

Thus in general terms the deductive synthesis by which I propose to supplement the detailed demonstrations of M. Vernes and M. Dujardin is simply this: that the monotheistic idea was not self-evolved, but was taken over by the Church-State from the wisdom of older priesthoods after this had become current. Ethical monotheism

1 Here first, with the civil war and the Maccabean period, the Jewish nation is in the full light of day, as distinguished from the twilight of the early Greek period under the Diadochi. From the family of the successful leaders of the revolt against Syria were appointed new high-priests. These, from a little before the end of the second century B.C., began to call themselves also Kings of the Jews. The history of the fully independent Jewish polity, under its "Hasmonæan" high-priests and kings, extends from 141 to 63 B.C., when Jerusalem was taken by Pompey. The native monarchy, indeed, went on longer, but henceforth under control by the Romans.

did not arise among rude herdsmen in an isolated country and without effective influence from civilised neighbours, but was seized upon ready-formed at the centres of Western Asiatic civilisation, and then adapted by a new priestly class to a particular cult and nationality. The nationality itself had something of an artificial character, being conceived as pre-eminently a religious community to be extended by proselytism. The doctrinal unity having thus been posited, and then set forth in the concrete by an appropriate framing of myth and legend describing the miracle-guided destiny of a chosen race, poetic writers, under the excitement of the generalised ideal, could burst forth into threatenings and promises taking their colour from the supposed national past. Whether these were put in the mouth of an imaginary herdsman like Amos, "neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet," or of an imaginary politician and courtier like Isaiah, merely affects the framework. The essential thing is the lyric appeal to Israel to be faithful to its destiny as the people of God. And, to mark the later stage of development, there is the turning against the sacerdotal religion which the established priesthood now works as a ceremonial while caring only, in the prophet's view, to adorn its life with luxuries, neglecting to do justice to the oppressed, and forming alliances in a secular interest with the profane heathen peoples and their rulers. This is what we find in the great prophets. Merely as an illustration,

I transcribe from Amos the first example that occurs. The God of Israel is supposed to speak :

" I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

" Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them : neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

" Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs ; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

" But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

" Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel ?

" But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

" Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts." [1]

And then at the end the restoration is promised :

" I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them ; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof ; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

" And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God." [2]

[1] Amos v. 21–27 (Authorised Version).
[2] *Ibid.* ix. 14–15.

Now Amos is placed first in order of time with practical unanimity. The "higher critics" suppose the herdsman of the eighth century who is represented as speaking the prophecy to have been actually the historical prophet. To evade some of the difficulties, they have to suppose that he only threatened and did not promise, and that the promise of restoration was appended by a later hand. Yet to suppose even a prediction of captivity precisely in the terms of the sacred history as written is sufficiently difficult at a period so long before, namely, 787 B.C.[1] or some twenty years later, as fixed by the names of the kings mentioned at the beginning of the book. And the assumption that portions of it date from so early a period is after all only a means of saving the ecclesiastical ascription, which might as easily be set aside as in any other case, so far as external evidence goes. On the other hand, if the prophecy is a late poetical composition, written after the legal and historical books, all is clear. The Mosaic sacrificial system is presupposed throughout. The legend of the forty years in the wilderness is already formed. The tabernacle of the exodus can be glanced at in a comparison that seems to allude to some modern perversion.[2] The way in which "Moloch" is spoken of does not in the least suggest a practical reformer at war with actual human sacrifices;

[1] Authorised Version, margin.

[2] I am unable to discuss the philology of the passage; but this seems as clear a sense as can be desired for imagery perhaps left purposely vague.

but rather conveys the idea that "the grisly king" was to Amos as to Milton only a name in the past. "The star of your god," which puzzles interpreters who are seeking literal facts,[1] presents no difficulty as poetic denunciation of rulers in a time of relatively advanced culture. In fact, the whole gains in interest and intelligibility if placed, as it is by the revised criticism, in the period when the half-Hellenised clerical aristocracy of Jerusalem was forming alliances now with the Seleucids and now with the Ptolemies. The prophet, by means of the legendary past, was recalling the nation to its religious ideal.

This mode of argument has been elaborated by M. Vernes in a manner that does not admit of summary. The proof is cumulative. By adding one detail to another he has shown how the prophetic books, in a whole system of references and allusions, presuppose the elaborated cult and legend of the post-exilic theocracy. These details, as must necessarily be the case in poetic books, are often small. We should not expect them to be otherwise, unless indeed it had been the prophets who put into shape the epic legend. And to suppose them inserted afterwards by redactors makes it impossible to understand the unity and literary flow, I will not say of whole books, but of long passages. The finished style of Amos, it is recognised by Hebraists themselves, does not come from the translators, but belongs to the

1 I note that Dr. Cheyne (*The Two Religions of Israel*, pp. 191–194) rejects the elaborate Assyriological explanations that have been offered.

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original. And we have to account not only for literary quality, but for the largeness with which the God of Israel is conceived as also the God of the universe.

A point brought out especially by M. Dujardin is the more advanced civilisation presupposed in the Prophets as compared with the Law. While the legal code assumes that, apart from the sacrificing priests and Levites, the population consists only of herdsmen and agriculturists, the prophetic writers describe new invasions of luxury brought by foreign commerce. Another point is the relative nearness of much in the Prophets to the Psalms, which the majority of critics now place from the third to the second century.[1] All this presents itself as confirmation of the general deduction ; but, of course, what I have been able to do is only to indicate a few heads. For the rest, I must refer the reader to the books themselves that contain the detailed argument. The illustration, and the few points of detail I have given, will suffice to show that the proof is not merely *a priori*. From one critic to another it has in fact proceeded spontaneously by the process called inverse deduction, in which the more empirical arguments come first and the more generalised theory afterwards. No one said at

1 Dr. Cheyne (*The Two Religions of Israel*, pp. 42, 398) and M. Dujardin (*Les Prédécesseurs de Daniel*, "Habacuc," pp. 37–46) alike detect compositions of the nature of psalms in Habakkuk, who is placed by tradition about 626 B.C. The alternative theories here come out very distinctly. According to Dr. Cheyne, we may treat the passages in question as post-exilic interpolations ; according to M. Dujardin, the inference is that the whole is a purely imaginative composition of late date.

the beginning, this must have been the order; but at the end the necessity can be shown.

That some such result is inevitable may, I think, be strongly argued from the course taken by the investigations of Dr. Cheyne, culminating in his *Two Religions of Israel.*[1] This work, it seems to me, is rightly described by him as an effort at reconstruction[2]; and the reconstruction is along lines which, if far from being "traditionalist" in the ordinary sense, are at least within the tradition that tries to explain the Hebrew sacred books wholly from Hebrew, or at any rate from Semitic, sources. It is in a sense, as he says, an attempt to preserve the old. For, though nearly all round the most open-minded of critics, he rejected the theories of M. Vernes, when they were first put forward, as "ill-sustained scepticism"; and he does not seem to have been interested in newer attempts at causal explanation by contacts with the Greek world. Yet there may be seen in his contributions to Old Testament criticism a successive abandonment of every proposed reference of the prophecies accepted as "pre-exilic" to actual events of known contemporary history. I take the reason to be this: that, as an accurate student, keeping himself in relation with what is now ascertained in detail of the ancient Oriental world, he has come to perceive with increasing certainty that the apparently historical allusions in the prophetic

1 *The Two Religions of Israel, with a Re-examination of the Prophetic Narratives and Utterances* (1911).

2 Preface, pp. xi.–xii.

books cannot be to events recorded in the Egyptian or Assyrian or Babylonian annals ; in any case, that they cannot have proceeded from writers with a direct knowledge of those events. Hence for reconstruction he finds it necessary to seek out other peoples with whom Israel may have been in relation. These, as is known to all students of the subject, he finds in North Arabia.

But is not the result regarding the prophecies, so far as it is negative, precisely what we should expect if the theories of the French critics are right ? Just because of the greater elevation of early prophecy, we must not expect the exactitude with which real events are indicated in the Book of Daniel. The author of that apocalypse has been quite fairly called " Pseudo-Daniel," because there is an evident intention to produce effect by apparently circumstantial prediction, the events thus treated as objects of prevision being of course really in the past, but in the recent and comparatively well-known past of the new Greek monarchies. The early prophets, on the other hand, aim at effect partly by a vague imaginative realisation of typical events from what they took, along with their audiences, to be the history of their nation, and partly by a really daring forecast of what was for them still the future. That is, they predicted triumph for their ideas ; a triumph afterwards achieved, though not in the manner of their forecast. Here the Book of Daniel is imitative. Still, there are transitions

from one type to the other,[1] and the political circumstances in view do not seem to be fundamentally unlike. Could not a first contact with the Greek monarchies call forth a reaction expressing itself in vaguely imaginative symbolism under the ancient names of Egypt and Babylon and Assyria, as those empires appeared in a national chronicle already much transformed by successive fictions; while a later apocalyptic writer, face to face with a more immediately practical crisis, turned to fresher and better-known history as material for the predictions of the seer whom he impersonated?

I hazard one attempt at relatively simple explanation, which I will put forth for what it is worth. Ezekiel, in a well-known prophecy, predicts the siege and destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar (xxvi. 7). Now Nebuchadnezzar did not destroy Tyre; but Alexander the Great did. Let us then suppose that (as the French critics hold) the writer of the prophecy lived under the successors of Alexander. How are we to explain his attitude? If on the whole I have taken the right view, there is no difficulty. "Nebuchadnezzar" was merely a symbol for a foreign "king of kings," and was not meant at the time to be taken for anything else. We cannot suppose the writer and his contemporaries at Jerusalem, now the centre of a country that was the battle-ground of rival monarchies, so

1 These are found by M. Dujardin in the "minor prophets" Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. See *Les Prédécesseurs de Daniel* (1908).

ignorant as not to know who it was that had actually taken Tyre after a prolonged siege. If the author of the Book of Daniel had treated the same subject, we should have had, instead of the great poetry and the merely conventional adoption of the usual literary fiction, an apocalyptic vision with cryptic references (easily interpreted) to the Macedonian conqueror and the monarchies of his successors, definitely framed to produce the illusion of an actual revelation to a seer in the distant past. In Ezekiel we have a writer who stands as much higher ethically as he does æsthetically. Modern—as would have been the case also with ancient—Europeans have, of course, to allow for the social medium of Hebrew literature, which made it impossible for even the most individualistic of the prophets to come forward as a writer in his own name.[1]

I do not think Dr. Cheyne would regard this view as derogatory[2]; but he has selected a different hypothesis. Starting from the North Arabian investigations of Winckler, he contends that Mizraim and Asshur, the Biblical names for

[1] There is some evidence, however, of a purely æsthetic interest in the prophecies when they were first composed. The writer of Ezekiel xxxiii. 32 is evidently transferring his own feelings—those of a greater Carlyle or Ruskin—to the imaginary prophet of the past. "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." But does not this point to the age of the Diadochi, with a comparatively settled life and a rising culture, in which there were "elegant pagans" who could even appreciate denunciations of themselves, rather than to an age like that of the Babylonian captivity?

[2] Indeed, he practically accepts it for passages classed by the higher criticism as interpolations; and these are often, both for poetry and thought, the finest.

Egypt and Assyria, may, in the texts, be corruptions, through misunderstanding, of similar names that really meant certain North Arabian tribes. Again, under many texts, he finds concealed the ethnic name of Jerahmeel, which is at the same time a divine name. This, he holds, was by some Israelites combined with the name of Jahveh as an object of devotion; but by the great prophets was set against it. Thus Jahvists and Jerahmeelites—the latter of whom had the stronger affinities to the North Arabian tribes in rivalry with Israel—became two parties within the nation.

Now on the traditional view about the dates of the documents, even as modified by the higher criticism, this hypothesis can by no means be dismissed as gratuitous. If the prophecies, or even the earlier portions of them, proceed from writers who lived in the period from the eighth to the sixth century, and refer to contemporary events, it ought to be possible to make out in a general way what those events were; for Orientalists now possess abundant records of the great empires of that period. The key, however, will not fit. Then clearly, if we are bent on excluding the hypothesis that the Hebrew prophetic writers are all post-exilic and the ethnic allusions predominantly symbolical, we must find some other contemporary reference. In North Arabian Mizrim, in a North Arabian district of which the name approximates to Asshur, and in "a second Babel in the North Arabian

land of Asshur,"[1] possible references have been found.

That this makes the problems very complex Dr. Cheyne admits ; but often, as he says, " truth is complex." Still, science shows also returns to simplicity. I have myself put forward as an analogy the passage from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican astronomy. In the end, however, neither simplicity nor complexity is the test, but causal explanation. Now if we adopt the theories of M. Vernes and M. Dujardin, we have the advantage of working with known historical States and events, and with peoples of known characters. On the theory of Dr. Cheyne we have to construct hypothetically the whole psychology of the nationalities and tribal religions regarded by the prophets as their typical antagonists. But suppose the reconstruction corresponds exactly to what we can affirm, with certainty, would be the kind of impression made on ardent adherents of the Jewish theocracy by invading Hellenism, as we know it to have been at the time to which the prophets are referred by the new school. In this case why recur to the unknown, and in support of that reference infer an indefinitely interpolated and misunderstood text, when the textual problem to a great extent disappears on the simpler theory ?[2]

1 *Op. cit.*, p. 372.

2 And, it may be pointed out, Dr. Cheyne, to understand the prophecies in their present state, has to superimpose on his own hypothesis a form of the hypothesis which for the French critics is sufficient by itself. " Possibly," he says (p. 42), " writers may have continued to refer to the N. Arabian oppression even after it had ceased simply

By a few illustrations I will try to show how Dr. Cheyne's psychological reconstruction is essentially a duplication, in hypothetical terms, of the known factors employed by the French critics. On their view, we have to do with a conflict between Hebraism in the form of austere devotion to the Law and the seductive Hellenism of the Asiatic kingdoms, which by its relaxing influence on a portion of the nation had made the other portion more intensely conscious of the need for resistance. The fascination of Greek civilisation for the higher classes in Judæa we can easily understand. Now Dr. Cheyne, for his own system of explanation, has to attribute hypothetically to North Arabians, "Canaanites," Jerahmeelites, and so forth, exactly the features which we know would be antipathetic, in the Hellenisers of Judæa, to the party that stood by the Deuteronomic Code. The higher classes, he finds, were opportunists,[1] inclined to compromise with Jerahmeel, the symbol of a more sensuous worship than that of Jahveh.[2] It would appear, he observes, that Jerahmeelites "formed an influential part of the nominally Israelite population; that they became, in fact, to a large extent the 'princes' or high officers."[3] The prophets were hostile to the politicians and their diplomacy.[4] "What Canaanites would have

for the sake of literary consistency." Again (pp. 335–336): "The [N. Arabian] names appear in later times to have acquired a typical or symbolical value." Also it is incidentally conceded (pp. 370–371) that past events may be described under the form of prophecy.

[1] P. 408. [2] P. 298. [3] P. 252. [4] P. 244.

called progress, Jeremiah and his like-minded predecessors regarded as degeneration." [1] Does not this present to us exactly the aspect under which the flexible Hellenising politicians would have appeared to the stiff theocrats? To take in connexion with it a relatively small but significant point. Dr. Cheyne has to give from his ethnic point of view a highly elaborate and hypothetical explanation of Zephaniah's threat of punishment on "the princes, and the sons of the king, and all those who put on foreign clothing" (i. 8).[2] Here M. Dujardin's explanation is simple and sufficient. The passage is still intelligible to us as just the kind of attack that a nationalist prophet would make on those who wore Greek dress.[3] We know that old-fashioned Romans took the same sort of offence. Finally, I will quote Dr. Cheyne's comment on the prophecy against Jehoiakim in Jeremiah (xxii. 13–19), portions of which he does not think can be genuine in their extant form. "I cannot believe," he says, "that the prophet would have been so ironical about the elegance of a new palace and the royal builder's fine taste for cedar-wood." [4] But is not this quite consistent with the rest? And does it not complete the picture we formed? Under the figure of King Jehoiakim, upon whom at last ruin came, a puritan poet of the Greek

[1] P. 56. [2] Pp. 407–408.

[3] *Cf. Les Prédécesseurs de Daniel*, p. 53: "Qu'est-ce que peut bien être le 'vêtement étranger' dont se revêtent les mauvais Juifs, si ce n'est le vêtement à la grecque, cause de scandale pour les Juifs pieux de l'époque des Psaumes."

[4] P. 393.

period, imaginatively identifying himself with an idealised dervish-seer of the past, is attacking at once the relative civilisation and culture and the corruption and oppression of the aristocrats of his own day. The actual High-Priest (who was also the Prince) of the time was no doubt a kind of Leo X.,—"enlightened," diplomatic, sensuous, and complacently presiding over ceremonial religion while himself fundamentally irreligious. The prophetic party, consistently hostile, in the spirit of the extant sacred books, at once to the good and evil of the foreign influx, denounced toleration of Greek statuary[1] and indifference to the sufferings of the poor[2] in the same breath.

Between one position of Dr. Cheyne and one of M. Dujardin there is a coincidence too remarkable not to be noticed. Both alike find the precursor of the literary poet-prophet in the popular dervish-seer, known in Palestine and the surrounding countries both much earlier and much later than the period of the great prophetic literature. In the statement of the position there is only this difference. According to M. Dujardin, the mere

1 I find confirmation of this in what Dr. Cheyne says at p. 34: "The same prophecy of Isaiah which mentions divination also refers to idols, or other symbols of deity, as everywhere to be seen, and as fabricated to meet a newly arisen demand, in contradistinction to those of olden time, which were few and rarely made." This seems a crucial point. It is intelligible that idolatry in this form should come from the Greeks or Hellenisers; but what reason is there to suppose that it could come to Israel from North Arabia, which probably had idols as rude as those of the old Palestinian kingdoms?

2 The new luxury, of course, required use of the *corvée*, which, as Dr. Cheyne recognises in his revision of the passage (Jer. xxii. 13, "that maketh his neighbour to work for nought, and giveth him not his wage"), was especially denounced by the prophet.

existence of the dervish-seer gave a sufficient hint to the literary prophets and to their precursors, who wrote legends like those of Elijah, for the imagination of great figures modelled on the type. According to Dr. Cheyne, the literary prophet like Amos comes at the end of an actual series beginning with the dervish. There are transitional types represented by figures like Balaam, and afterwards Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, perhaps very slightly historical in their present form, yet corresponding to some reality in the past. Here again, a minor as well as a major coincidence will be observed. For M. Dujardin also, as was just indicated in passing, the literary prophets have precursors; only these are not Samuel himself and the other prophetic men of action in the past, but the writers who imagined the legends afterwards introduced into the "historical" books of Samuel and Kings. Here, it must be confessed, we are in the region of conjecture. Dr. Cheyne himself recognises the difficulty of knowing with any approach to certainty what historical elements there may have been in the prophetic figures of legend. And probably M. Dujardin would admit that the literary prophet, in the excitement of composition, was conscious (as a Greek poet also could be) of something in him resembling the " madness "—the intoxication by the god—of the popular seer. On his view, too, therefore, the types need not be regarded as absolutely unmediated. There was a natural basis in the psychology of the prophet for the

literary artifice by which he placed himself in the position of a seer under the old kings of Ephraim or of Judah.

Another problem raised by Dr. Cheyne brings with it a difficulty that does not appear to him soluble, as he candidly confesses, on the line he has taken. Who, he asks, were the "men of thought" behind the prophetic movement?[1] For such must have existed as well as the men of action. "We know not," he replies; and he evidently thinks it hopeless to look for them in North Arabia. "N. Arabian priests," he remarks, "had not the speculative faculty of their fellows of Heliopolis and Babylon."[2] On the view set forth in the earlier chapters, the difficulty is solved. The speculative precursors at once of the priests and prophets of Jerusalem or Judæa[3] were those very priests of Heliopolis and Babylon themselves. We need look no further. And for what, we may ask, were the "men of thought" needed? Clearly, to formulate the universalistic monotheism of which the prophets in their highest moods became the poetic voices. And this, according to the position Dr. Cheyne now takes up with regard to the texts, was "post-exilic." The universalist passages we admire were not, he holds, in the genuine Amos or Hosea of the eighth century. Thus the explanation I have given seems in the last resort absolutely demanded

[1] P. 77. [2] P. 75.

[3] *Cf.* Cheyne, p. 38: For a provincial as for a city prophet "Judah *is* Jerusalem." This is an important point with Dujardin. The Bible was the literature of Jerusalem.

by the exclusions he is obliged to make. And, monotheism being thus traced back to its source, there is no longer any need to attempt a separation of pre-exilic and post-exilic passages. Law and Prophets alike belong to the Church-State formed after the exile.[1]

When we consider the whole development, a parallel suggests itself with the scheme of Plato, in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, for the instruction of the multitude in religion and morality. The comparison has been put trenchantly by Mr. J. M. Robertson[2]: "What the Hebrew Bible-makers actually did, Plato proposed to do." And Mr. Benn, in his *Revaluations* (1909), quotes from Nietzsche the saying that Plato had "the soul of a Semitic priest." Caird, in his *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, discusses Plato's proposals, but on the whole concludes that they were impracticable; and so no doubt they were if we imagine thinkers who had arrived at the stage of Greek philosophy in Plato's time deliberately setting themselves to invent appropriate poetic myths for literal acceptance in a Hellenic State. This, however, is not precisely the condition presented by Judæa in the time, from the fifth to the fourth century, contemporary with Socrates,

1 That any possible explanation will ever make the prophecies clear through and through I do not maintain. Dr. Cheyne's examination of the text is undoubtedly successful in showing how extremely obscure they often are as they stand. In detail it is merely a question of relative clearness and simplicity where we cannot hope to explain everything. Obscure language in compositions of the kind was doubtless to some extent intentional; though to suggest that it was so in a particular case is of course only a guess.

2 *A Short History of Freethought*, 2nd ed. (1906), vol. i. p. 170.

Plato, and Aristotle; during which we suppose the Church-State to have been organised, and its laws first put into writing. The priests were the only class with any literary training, the population as a whole having scarcely risen above semi-barbarism. Thus a conception like that of Plato could be realised, though doubtless not quite in the manner that he would have desired. As Caird says: "He regards it as the business of art and poetry to present the truths of ethics and religion in a form suitable to minds that are yet unripe and unfitted for the reflective processes of science. In particular, he thinks that it is the office of mythology to inculcate a simple faith in the omnipotence of goodness upon those who are not yet prepared to grapple with the problem of evil; and in this poetic teaching he would have all the perplexing difficulties of life evaded, and all inconvenient facts suppressed. . . . Poetry is to tell its 'noble untruth,' and no scepticism or criticism is to be allowed to breathe a breath of suspicion upon it."[1] This is in effect the authorised theodicy of the history of Israel and of the hortatory passages in the Law. If the people suffered, that was because it had sinned: repentance would bring reconciliation with God and a return of prosperity. So it continued to be with the Prophets, yet not without modifications which again prove their later date. In Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah (to take them in what the revised criticism finds

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. i. pp. 149–150.

to be their real chronological order) there is a progressive grappling with the problems raised by reflective thought. Jeremiah and Ezekiel deny that the children suffer for the sins of their fathers ;[1] the doer of the wrong has to suffer. More stress is laid on the inward disposition and less on the outward act, though it is an error to regard the Law itself as demanding only external morality ; inward love of God and the neighbour is required. As the prophetic view broadens, Israel is regarded as having a mission for which suffering is essential. This culminates in the second part of Isaiah. It is true that the ethical code is only for Jews and proselytes to Judaism. The ideal community is not that of humanity as such, or of the universe as a manifestation of reason, as it was for the Stoics ; but is essentially a divine monarchy which at present includes only a small part of the world. And no doubt at the basis of the most magnificent poetry there is the most unbending fanaticism for the Lord whose name was Jealous. Yet it is worth while to recall, on behalf of the ethics of this theocracy, that, as Havet says : " If the Jews believed firmly that their God loved only Jews, they believed also that he would one day make Jews of all men." [2]

And on one side of Hebrew thought national limitations were really transcended. What is called the " Wisdom-literature " reached a high

[1] Jer. xxxi. 29–30 ; Ezek. xviii. 2–4.
[2] *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, vol. iii. p. 443.

degree of gnomic reflectiveness analogous to the pre-philosophic thought of Greece. The Books of Job and Ecclesiastes go further, and may be compared with the sceptical opposition to Greek theism. The bare possibility of a theodicy was made subject to question. And what is questioned is the universal providential order, not merely whether Israel has rightly or wrongly suffered. There are doubtless in both books, as M. Vernes has noted, touches making us conscious of specifically Jewish religion in the background. Job is imagined as an Arabian practising the religious observances of a proselyte to Judaism. Thus his fortunes represent a possible case at the time when the book was written—that is, in the third century B.C. For all the local colour, however, it seems to me that neither the author of the Book of Job nor the author of Ecclesiastes can have been as a thinker bound within national limitations. The question is posited as clearly as it has ever been, whether the moral law is supreme in the universe. Job, in some ways the highest expression of the Hebrew poetic genius, leaves it insoluble; for we can hardly suppose that the vision of the uncontrollable and irresponsible might of God was meant to be taken for a solution. Ecclesiastes, a later work, seems in many passages to decide positively and finally for an absolute indifference of the nature of things as between good and evil. In both alike there is a total absence of metaphysics, by which no Jewish thinker was touched who had not studied in the

Greek schools ; but silently the national religion has given place to pure ethics, for which Jewish law and custom, if they are part of the scenery, are as external as the religious customs of his city to a Greek philosopher.

It was not, however, by its sublimest or profoundest work that Hebraism set going the movement that conquered the Western world. Even the second part of Isaiah, with its vision of all peoples turning to Jerusalem, would have been no more than another piece of literature had it not been for the apocalypses. Immensely inferior as these were in distinctive genius, they brought with them the spark of a popular mythology that could set on fire everything else. In them appeared the figure of the Messiah, the *Christus* or Anointed King, a visible redeemer and bearer of sovereignty. Arising at first, as is thought, in Babylonia, the idea of the Lord's deputy traversed Judæa to pass over to a new empire and civilisation. The new empire, at the stage now reached, was spontaneously returning to the institutions of the East ; and of the whole East Judæa, to the Western imagination, began to seem the heir and Jerusalem the most illustrious city.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CHRISTIAN ERA

The obscure early history of the Messianic idea has yet to be investigated in full; but we may take the meaning of it to be that a vicegerent of the supreme God is to bring the world under one rule, as the founders of empires had aspired to do. Thus it could easily coalesce with the idea of a mediator-god. Such a god was Mithra, the Persian Sun-god, who, from a subordinate deity in the old Aryan mythology, had become the centre of a new religious propaganda in which he was represented as passing through a phase of suffering before his triumph. Messianic Judaism connected itself apparently with a popular substratum resembling the Mithraic cult among the Persians. The Messiah or world-conqueror, analogous to the Persian Saoshyant, who may have sprung from the same Babylonian original, could by himself be imagined as realised in a king, a descendant or successor of David, doing God's will on earth. David, in the Latin Vulgate, gives to his predecessor Saul the title of the Lord's *christus*, or anointed, which he afterwards himself bears. But somehow this notion became joined with that of a figure himself supernatural, perhaps

an ancient Semitic deity. The quite unhistorical Book of Joshua, or Jesus as it is in the Greek, transformed one name which there are grounds for regarding as originally that of a supernatural being into the name of a national hero, the leader of the imaginary theocracy that represented the ideals of later Judaism, in a war of extermination against its enemies. So also, it is held by some, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were transformed gods analogous to the Greek heroes. These mythological elements, very imperfectly traceable beneath the official religion, had points of contact with similar popular substrata elsewhere. They were met by analogous worships from Egypt and the non-Jewish East, such as the cults of Isis and Osiris, Adonis or Tammuz, Cybele and Attis. These were associated with animistic ideas that had disappeared more completely in official Judaism than anywhere else. It has long been a commonplace of criticism that the survival of the individual soul plays no part at all in the religion of the Old Testament. The contrast has also become familiar between the Olympian and the Chthonian religions of Greece ; of which the latter was more archaic and popular, and had a far more strongly marked animism. Its animistic side was developed by the Orphic movement. The theory of this as of other new religions was that by mysterious rites, as well as by observing a distinctive code of moral conduct with more or less ascetic features, each soul was to attain a glorified life, as the god, whether called Dionysus

or Osiris, or by some other name, had attained it after his suffering and descent into the underworld. In what precise way all these ideas interacted and came together in the competing religions of the Roman Empire it may never be possible to determine except conjecturally; but we know of the existence of all the strands. We know also from the result that the finally triumphant religion succeeded in representing itself as continuous with the official Judaism which, in its priesthood and its central rites, perished at the capture of Jerusalem and the burning of the Temple by Titus in the year 70 of the Christian era.

The annexation of the Jewish sacred books, however effected, counted enormously towards the success of the new creed, thus linked on to a propaganda going back to the second century B.C. About that time, while Hebrew, the particular Semitic dialect in which the greater part of the Bible is written, was giving place to Aramaic as the spoken language of Judæa, the Bible itself was being translated for the use of the Jews, mostly Greek-speaking, now diffused throughout the Hellenic world. These, while rigorously practising their national rites and refusing to have any part in those of aliens, yet turned to those aliens with the aim of winning them over for their own God and Law. The God of the Jews, every one recognises for this period, was held to be the Maker of heaven and earth. All other dominions, it was now declared in accordance with the pro-

phetic and apocalyptic teaching, must give place to his. And a doctrine of "resurrection from the dead" gradually formed itself, perhaps out of the vestiges of primitive animism aided by Persian and Egyptian ideas, and became in the end so powerful that to the Romans an absolute confidence in the imperishableness of the individual soul appeared to characterise the Jews as it did the Druids of Gaul. Thus for the prophetic vision of triumphant nationality there could be substituted that of a universal community of believers in the religion. The "day of the Lord" of the old prophets was a great day of battle, in which, after the victory, judgment would be executed on the nations that had opposed his chosen people, and the people as then represented on earth would live in joy and dominion. This now became a "last day." All the righteous who had ever lived and accepted the law and its promises were to rise again—with their bodies, according to the materialistic imagination of the apocalyptists—to receive their reward in a new life; while the wicked, marked out by their exclusion from incorporation with the Lord's chosen, would be destroyed or reserved for punishment, either everlasting or for a term. All was set forth in tangible detail, though the details differed in different apocalypses. What was needed to enable the imagination to seize men's minds was a condition of the world that could furnish the contributory circumstances from without.

Before turning to these, it is desirable to sum up the general effect of that Judaism in which the next form of Western religion was to find its official antecedents. We may take the statement of it from the Apology of Josephus, written, some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, against the rhetorician Apion, one of the "anti-Semites" of antiquity.

The word invented by Josephus to describe the system to outsiders is theocracy.[1] This has since been extended to describe at once the more ancient systems of the East that had preceded Judaism and the system of mediæval Europe that took it for its model. A brief summary of the statements of Josephus will show how the Judaic form of it was, as compared with the relation between State and religion in classical antiquity, a reversion to an older type, while nevertheless Judaism itself bore the marks of what Comte has called the "revolutionary transition." Both characters were essential to the prestige it exercised. For the world was undergoing a cyclical change; and yet, as all now admit, no return of an old order can ever bring back that order precisely as it was.

With the art of the apologist, Josephus puts in the forefront the monotheistic idea which Judaism has in common with the religious philosophy of the Greeks; but, he says, the philosophers taught their higher view of God only to a few, whereas Moses aimed at making his doctrine

[1] *Contra Apionem*, ii. 16.

universal in the nation. And under this doctrine everything is systematised. For theocracy differs from other conceptions of the order of the State in bringing all the moral virtues under religion. These cannot be regarded independently of the fundamental dogma; nor can religious piety be treated as merely one virtue among others. In other legislative systems, thinking about the conduct of life and the practice of it as mere custom have been separated, some taking for their province one and some the other; but our legislator left not the smallest point to individual choice.[1] Other peoples do not even know their own laws in common, but have to consult experts; whereas any Jew, if one were to ask him, could more easily tell all the laws than his own name. Among the rest, all sorts of opinions may be heard, not only casually from any one you meet, but from philosophers; some of whom have endeavoured to get rid of the very being of God, while others deny his providence over men. Hence the accusation that the Jews have discovered nothing new. But this, Josephus maintains, is really a credit to them. "For the others think it a distinction to adhere to none of their paternal customs, and celebrate the wonderful cleverness of those who have had the daring to transgress them most. We, on the contrary, hold it for a principle that there is only one wisdom and one virtue; and that is, neither to

1 *Contra Apionem*, ii. 17: οὐδὲν οὐδὲ τῶν βραχυτάτων αὐτεξούσιον ἐπὶ ταῖς βουλήσεσι τῶν χρησομένων κατέλιπεν.

do nor to think anything whatever opposed to the laws laid down from the beginning. . . . And what could be fairer or more just than to hold that God is the ruler of the whole of things, and to commit to the priests in common the regulation of the highest interests, entrusting the chief priest of all with the direction of the other priests ? " [1]

On one side this strikingly recalls the comments ascribed by Plato to the Egyptian priest whom Solon visited, upon the eternal childlike curiosity of the Greeks and the absence among them of anything venerable from antiquity ; but there is another side. The conservatism of sacerdotal government, which Josephus holds up as the ideal, was indeed fundamental to theocracy, as it might have been generalised from Egypt or Babylon. And the Jews were undoubtedly reviving that apparently outworn order in a militant form. Yet with its reawakening there has come something else. Knowledge in detail of the sacred law is now not simply for the priests, but for all the people. The priests are only administrators. The idea of the Pact between the people and its God has had its effect in producing something which, if it is not in the political sense democracy, is at any rate far removed from the conception of the priestly caste in the older civilisations. These could not by their religion survive the destruction of their outward institutions, as Judaism did not only in its successors but in itself.

[1] *Contra Apionem*, ii. 20.

I agree indeed with the view upheld by Mr. Benn in his *Revaluations*, that in the Hebrew literature, including the Prophets, there is nothing that can be rightly called either socialism or democracy. As articulate doctrines, both democracy and socialism are of Græco-Roman origin. It is true that in the Prophets and the Psalms there is a literature of the poor and oppressed; but, as Mr. Benn shows, no demand is made for equality of rights or for social reconstruction, but only for the carrying out of the law, which remained in its ideal, as in fact, a priestly code, by the rich and powerful. Yet even this, when the books became widely diffused, gave Hebraism a sort of revolutionary tinge. And if so far there was nothing but emotion, powerless without a body of ideas, the Jews had at any rate behind their insurgence against the order of decadent antiquity one distinctive principle held with a spirit not to be broken. Whatever they may have contributed afterwards, by the religion that claimed them as its ancestors, to rebuild the monarchico-theocratic order in Europe, their ideal of the direct government of the people by its God compelled them to oppose, with an obstinacy that nothing else could have given, the deification of kings, taken over from Asia and Egypt by the Macedonian monarchies, and afterwards by the Roman Empire. There are no passages in Ezekiel or Isaiah more impressive than the outbursts of exultation over the divine king of Egypt or of Babylon lying in the world of the dead surrounded

by slain men, though he thought that he was a god and not a man. Under the contemptuous tolerance of philosophy the system of apotheosis might have gone on for ever. It was one of those things that intolerant fanaticism is needed to destroy.

Thus it is not without reason that near the end of the historical literature the author of the Book of Ezra, in the form of a letter from adversaries, pays Jerusalem the compliment of treating it as notoriously, to the despots of Asia, "the rebellious and the bad city." "So shalt thou find in the book of the records," its enemies write to the Great King, "and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed." [1] After the final destruction by Titus, however, it is interesting to observe that the heathen historian, Dio Cassius, did more justice to the heroic resistance of the Jews than Josephus, who, devoted as he remained to his ancestral religion, had in fact deserted the cause of his countrymen.[2]

But again there is another side to the case. The revival of a decaying order has inevitably something we can only call reactionary which that order had not in itself. The priesthoods of Egypt and Babylonia were in their time the repositories of knowledge. Thus their total system

[1] Ezra iv. 12–15.
[2] *Cf.* Th. Reinach, *Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains, etc.*, p. 195, *n.* 3.

included principles of intellectual direction for the administration of civilised life.[1] With the Jews, on the other hand, as soon as religion, transplanted from the old order, becomes a specialised thing, we can see in it the principle of what was long afterwards called the "Kingdom of Darkness." Made by priestly legislators the speciality of a nation relatively barbarous, it is as if purposely set against light and civilisation. There is evident a tendency to insist on the harsher and sterner side of "natural religion," such as we find in modern reactionaries who know in their hearts that reason and humanity are against them. Almost at the beginning of the Book of Genesis we perceive an unmistakable intention to maintain firmly the principle of blood-sacrifice as against the milder commutations which may already have been coming into use in civilisations so old as those of Egypt and Babylonia.

"Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

"And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

"But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect."[2]

In view of this, it is noteworthy that Apion, among other things, made it a reproach to the Jews that they sacrificed animals. Coming from

[1] In this it was an anticipation of Comte's ideal "Catholicism." The resemblance may enable us to understand his preference of the name to that of Christianity.

[2] Gen. iv. 3–5.

a rhetorician, who of course only said what he thought would tell, the accusation indicates that in the first century of the Christian era the Neo-Pythagorean campaign against blood-offerings was making way, so that an attack on the sanguinary rites of the Temple would meet with popular sympathy.[1] We know how the story of Cain was treated later by Byron and the romantics in revolt, as distinguished from the romantic reactionaries. In their version, it was by an act of vengeance from the divine malevolence that the protester against the cruelties and tyrannies of the Lord God became the first manslayer.[2] When we turn to the Book of Genesis itself, we find that the arts of life are treated in a tone of religious contempt as the inventions of the descendants of Cain, the evil race; while of the good race, descended from Seth, we are told that in their days "began men to call upon the name of the Lord."[3]

Recognition, however, is due to the humanity of some precepts in the Mosaic law concerning animal life. And, if we look upon that law as a deliberately constructed code, not a mere growth, we shall be inclined to see in the precepts more than ancient "taboos." Doubtless they may

1 Th. Reinach (*op. cit.*, p. 134) supposes that Apion was a Stoic, but this would not explain an objection taken against animal sacrifices.

2 Compare the words of the resuscitated Cain to the shade of Abel in Leconte de Lisle's poem :

O victime, tu sais le sinistre dessein
D'Iavèh m'aveuglant du feu de sa colère.
L'iniquité divine est ton seul assassin.
*Poèmes Barbares*, "Qaïn."

3 Gen. iv. 26.

have had their remote origin in taboo; but the legislators, in preserving one thing and rejecting another, showed humane intention. Porphyry, in his books against flesh-eating and animal sacrifices, gave the Jewish legislation credit for this. His citing the precepts for praise may be set against Schopenhauer's depreciation. It would have been well if on this point the Christian Church had followed its Jewish predecessors instead of the Stoics, who, on the ground that animals are not rational beings, denied that any regard is due to them.

So we might go on through a whole series of antitheses; but it is time now to return to the state of the Western world when the Jewish and afterwards the Christian propaganda began to spread over it. To understand its preparedness, we must run rapidly through the stages of its outward life from the end of the Persian War.

How clearly conscious of its progress the younger world could become for a moment may be seen in a passage of the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, where Apollo as the Hellenic god of light drives out the Furies from his temple, telling them to go where mutilations and sanguinary tortures and stonings to death are practised.[1] Curiously, Æschylus has been looked upon as a prejudiced conservative; just as we are now in many quarters expected to regard Tacitus in the same way because he did not welcome the divine advent

[1] *Eum.* 186–190. The passage itself has unfortunately been mutilated.

of autocracy, with its accompaniment of millionaire-freedmen, court-eunuchs, and court-poisoners. Æschylus, however, recognises that the Furies cannot be utterly expelled, but are there to wait on failure in doing the right. Now the Greeks, and afterwards the Romans, did not in working out their institutions fulfil the first promises of a higher social type. Their problems being beyond their power, the immemorial past, with its chastisements, had to return for a season. And this, it must be added, is so far much more a warning than a ground of complacency to the later modern world that has emerged from the wreck.

The clue to the cyclical change, though there were many other conditions, is that the only alternative to perpetual wars was an empire; that an empire could only be held together by monarchy; and that a monarchy, for the bond of overawing belief that could subdue men's minds, needed a theocratic religion. There had been a time undoubtedly when the institution of directive kingship was an advance. At one stage it was the means of breaking down or preventing the formation of an unalterably fixed hierarchical system of caste. Yet the time soon came, in Asia as afterwards in Christian Europe, when the compromise thought normal in the eighteenth century, the union of priest and king, issued in the most deadly form of absolutism. And everywhere, when once the republican polity has been achieved, monarchy can only be

regarded, inevitable though it may be, as a political lapse. Now in antiquity some attempts were made at empire under a republic, but these failed. To the attempt of Athens justice has never quite been done historically on the imperial side. Its exclusiveness as compared with that of Rome is no doubt rightly blamed in view of the practical problem to be solved for the immediate future; but the refusal to lose, by incorporating subjects, the absolute power of self-direction in Athens itself, meant after all a resolution to preserve the higher type of political life. Though the comparison of England to Rome is more usual, and is justified in some respects, the Athenian had, in common with the British Empire, not only the external feature that it depended on sea-power, but also the persistent retention of a characteristic and individual life at the centre. Athens never became the mere centre of an empire-State, but remained a free State presiding over an empire.[1] And, as Sir Alfred Lyall has pointed out after the experience of a distinguished Indian administrator, the unified national State (of which the city-State may be regarded as one variety on a smaller and more finished scale) is a higher political organism than the sort of composite unity called imperial. To imperial I think we may add federal. A federal league delimiting powers between the imperial and the local legisla-

[1] Both Havet and Eduard Meyer, whom I have had so much occasion to refer to all along, and who as foreign observers may be considered impartial, find the nearest modern analogue of Pericles in the great English parliamentary statesmen.

tures could never have meant for the world what historic Athens did. Unfortunately, the Greek conception of the right of each city to a position of autonomous sovereignty made the mildest dominion of the presiding State technically a "tyranny." Thus the sense of injustice in the subject Hellenic cities helped the rivals of Athens to destroy her hegemony; but with its collapse the brightest episode in ancient history came to an end. After it followed "discord, Macedon, and Rome." The Macedonian Empire founded by Philip and Alexander was essentially monarchical, and broke up into a group of monarchies. Yet, easily as we may understand the Greek resistance to Philip which was urged by Demosthenes, the presidency initiated by him both left room for and actually promoted what was then the only practicable form of progress, namely, the diffusion of Hellenic culture. The Greek States had ceased to do anything but wear each other out in perpetual wars. In the new political order, both under the Macedonians and the Romans, philosophy was the antiseptic of the Greek world, and secured to it the intellectual direction of the West as long as the ancient civilisation lasted. The political decline, however, was irreversible. Rome, after taking up for a time the republican succession, organising its conquests under the aristocratic government of the Senate, which it tried to combine with an urban democracy, passed definitely under monarchy before the end of the first century B.C.,

and thus opened the last phase of the ancient world.

The Roman type, as compared with the Greek or Athenian, has been called "half-civilisation," and we may observe the contrast in one conspicuous case. The gladiatorial shows, it is now known, were not put an end to by Christianity. The Christian doctors followed those ancient moralists who condemned them; but, for all that, they were exhibited whenever they could be afforded till the Western Empire came to an end. Athens, on the other hand, even in the time of decadence, refused to receive them; though it is related that the intervention of a philosopher was sometimes necessary to prevent their gaining a footing. Now those exhibitions probably arose out of the funeral sacrifices of the pre-Aryan and theocratically minded Etruscans, from whom Rome derived its culture before it came in contact with Greece. The background of a gloomier religion seems, however, to have given the Roman governing and literary class a more strenuous antipathy to the superstition which it did not feel itself able to dispense with in public life; and, under the aristocratic rule of the republican period, private freethought was safer than it had been under the Athenian democracy. In the imperial monarchy, during its pre-Christian period, the same freedom was on the whole preserved; but from a very early time symptoms of the slow change that was to lead to the next phase are perceptible.

These symptoms may be noticed in passing from Lucretius to Virgil. It is a quite sustainable position, not only that, as Mr. Benn says,[1] "in positive knowledge, Virgil greatly excelled Lucretius," but also that Virgil's philosophy, as such, is superior. He does not, of course, show the power of argumentatively working out a single system as a whole and in detail, and he seems to fluctuate between different views. On the other hand, he never falls under the illusion of imagining that a physical hypothesis can furnish an ultimate explanation in philosophy. Each view that he suggests has a meaning in metaphysical terms, and even the differences seem to correspond to inevitable and perhaps permanent doubts about the ultimate constitution of reality. Is the inner principle of all things a kind of universal sentiency, or is it something analogous to intellectual direction? Does the individual mind emerge from the common ground of the animated universe to be reabsorbed into it, or are there separate souls that go through successive stages of life, preserving their identity? Passages might be found to illustrate any of these answers, but none to illustrate mechanicism pure and simple. Now I do not think this idealism is a sign or a source of reaction. John Scotus Erigena and Giordano Bruno, who were inspired by it, were as far as possible from being reactionaries. Bruno deliberately preferred the doctrine of "the Pythagorean poet" to that of Lucretius,

[1] *The Greek Philosophers* (1882), vol. ii. p. 205.

whom he admired and resembled in temper. And, if we estimate Virgil by tone of feeling generally, he illustrates perhaps better than any one the kind of progress that makes the latter part of the ancient world appear so modern in its refinements. Yet, as compared with Lucretius, he is undoubtedly in some ways reactionary; and this is a symptom of the change that partly produced and was partly produced by the new monarchy. While Lucretius rises to his greatest height of indignant eloquence in denouncing the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Virgil carefully introduces, as part of his imitative archæological detail, a sacrifice of captives by Æneas at the funeral of Pallas. Homer, in the time of rising humanism, had given to the traditional sacrifice of the Trojan prisoners by Achilles the least space possible. His successor, living in an age that inherited all the centuries of humanist civilisation, but in a time of royalist and sacerdotal revival, makes the pious Æneas a religious hero analogous to the pious Abraham, whose faith, however, was shown by his willingness to offer up a victim not in the end demanded by the God who had put him to the test.

If closely examined, the later books of the *Æneid* offer some analogy with the national epic of the Hebrew patriarchs and the return of the descendants of Jacob to Palestine. The legends embodied in both were taken up comparatively late with a "pragmatic" aim. As a natural consequence, they are much more remote from

fact than those that formed the traditional material of the far more brilliantly and spontaneously imaginative Greeks. Since recent discoveries, we know that there actually was a Siege of Troy ; but it is as little likely that we shall ever discover traces of Israel in Egypt as that we shall be able to follow the stages by which a Trojan colony passed over to Latium. The brilliant historian Ferrero, who often combines common sense with paradox, has very plausibly conjectured that Iulus, as the name for the son of Æneas, may have been simply an invention of Julius Cæsar to glorify his ancestors. At first, as we know from the opening of the poem of Lucretius, it was not the Cæsars, but the Romans generally, who were called the " Æneadæ."

I have just referred to the author of *The Greatness and Decline of Rome*, recently translated into English. By citation of one or two points in his work, it will be possible to give very briefly the indications necessary as to the character of the period we are reviewing. These indications will be the more effective because Ferrero seems to regard the early principate as a sincere attempt to revive the republic as far as that was practicable, and not merely to disguise the monarchy under republican forms. Now I accept the view that attaches great importance to the preservation of those forms. It meant that the literature and modes of feeling of the republican period were consecrated in the system of education for the rest of what we call pagan antiquity. Yet, if

Augustus and Tiberius fully understood the necessity for compromise, it does not follow at all that they were sincere republicans, but only that they were able and prudent men who had learnt the lesson of the Ides of March. Without the successful conspiracy against Julius Cæsar, I do not see how this necessity could have been made visible. Cæsar himself, unless the tradition is wrong, was in sentiment and principle a Cæsarean royalist. This was the justification of what Comte calls the act of "metaphysical fanaticism and aristocratic rage." The Roman aristocracy, in spite of its faults, was defending the freedom that remained in the world. And, after Philippi, the tyrannicides still alive were hunted down and put to death as slayers of a quasi-divine person, like the English regicides at the Restoration. Both modes of ideal feeling existed, the republican and the royalist; but in the age of Augustus the former belonged to the past and the latter to the future.[1] The party that Ferrero calls conservative was therefore at the time the party that was resisting a decadence.

Still, in so far as it desired to preserve ancient privilege, it was the natural support of an authoritative order. And therefore the very argument that Ferrero uses to show that Augustus could

[1] *Cf.* Havet, *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, vol. ii. (3rd ed., 1880), pp. 192–193: "En un mot ce que nous appelons volontiers l'esprit du moyen âge était déjà celui de cette brillante époque, prise dans son fond; ce fond est recouvert pour nous par l'éclat d'une élite qui fait l'histoire et qui la remplit, mais il s'étend profondément au-dessous d'elle, et elle-même n'en est pas absolument dégagée. C'est sur ce fond que le christianisme a poussé."

not be aiming at the foundation of a monarchy can be turned precisely to prove that he was. By his social legislation, the argument runs, he attempted to restore the vigour of the aristocracy.[1] But in what way? By restriction of the right of candidature for office to citizens with a property qualification of at least 400,000 sesterces. "Thus the political career which had been open to the poorer citizens for a century was now closed; the old timocratic and aristocratic constitution was restored; political posts which had formerly been open to such men as Ventidius, the muleteer, were now declared to be the privilege of the moneyed classes; government became the monopoly of an aristocracy which, though degenerate, idle, and disunited, was none the less legally defined. It was a decision which concluded a century of terrible struggle, and which might inaugurate a new order of things; none the less, it was received with such universal indifference that our knowledge of it depends upon a few lines written at a later date by a historian who attached no great importance to the event." In a note the author adds: "The only allusion, curiously enough, that I have found to this reform is in the *Amores* of Ovid: *Curia pauperibus clausa est. Dat census honores.*"[2] Then on the next page he proceeds: "Finally, the prætors were allowed to expend, when they wished, three times the amount allocated to them from the

[1] *The Greatness and Decline of Rome*, vol. v. chap. iii.: "The Great Social Laws of the Year 18 B.C."

[2] *Op. cit.*, vol. v. p. 74.

treasury upon the public games. The sumptuary law forbade the rich to display their wealth in their own houses, but the public had every right to amusement in the streets and in the theatre. Here we see the new democratic spirit which became obvious at Rome after the restoration of the moneyed aristocracy, a spirit which Augustus was well able to satisfy." I hope the irony in the last sentence is intentional; but is not the whole method that which would be adopted by one who desired to found a stable monarchy where it did not already exist? We see that it was really the aristocracy during the conflicts of the republican period that had thrown the career open to talents. Under the peace of the monarchy, after the proscriptions, what remained of the former governing class was to be cherished as no longer dangerous, but capable of serving as a mediating element in the graded hierarchy of which kingship is the summit. Political apathy, and popular interest in ceremonial display, were circumstances favourable to this new order. These, with the plutocratical qualification for membership of the directing classes, are precisely what a modern reactionary would desire. For each order, republican or monarchical, has a certain organic character; and the modes of public sentiment on which it was based when new tend to preserve it when old. The historian in the end recognises quite clearly what the result was. In a chapter on "The Altar of Augustus and of Rome" he tells us how "Augustus became a god and a monarch

in Gaul as in the East. On August 1 of the year 10 B.C. were laid the foundations of that European monarchy which remains almost intact at the present day."[1] It might have been added that modern France, inheriting the character of pioneer, has been the first great European nation to cast the system definitely aside.

Often with modern historians the Cæsarean monarchy gets credit for the humaner legislation that followed the development of philosophical ethics. This humaner legislation did indeed go on, but rather through a kind of *vis inertiæ* of progress once started than through monarchical direction. If it was actively promoted from the centre, that was in the reformed empire, due to the senatorial revival of the second century with its return to republican ideals. How little the monarchical system as such told in favour of humanity may be seen in an incident related by Tacitus, which no one who has read it can forget. In A.D. 61, in the reign of Nero, an old law requiring the execution of the whole household of slaves when the master had been murdered by one of them was carried out in spite of popular risings by the personal intervention of the monarch and under the protection of the imperial guards.[2] It is true that he did not consent further to the banishing of all the freedmen who had been under the same roof, as was proposed by Cingonius

1 *Op. cit.*, vol. v. p. 212.

2 Tac., *Ann.* xiv. 45: "Tum Cæsar populo edicto increpuit atque omne iter quo damnati ad pœnam ducebantur militaribus præsidiis sæpsit."

Varro—himself afterwards put to death without trial by order of Galba ; but we learn that, while the custom of wholesale execution had existed in republican times, its severity had already been increased under the monarchy by successive decrees in A.D. 10 and 57.[1]

And yet the fact is indisputable that the imperial monarchy of Rome always retained the marks of popular origin. Its pedigree went back to the tribunes of the Roman *plebs*. Julius Cæsar, its founder both real and titular, while fundamentally a man of kingly and even papal authority, began as a revolutionary chief and became the leader of the democratic party. That the impress remained even in the Byzantine period, after all the consecrations taken over from old and new religions, has been shown by Professor Bury in his recent lecture on *The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire*.[2] The result he arrives at is that even in its last stage, in spite of the growing tendency to legitimism with its theory of divine right, " the Roman autocracy had definite restrictions which must be described as constitutional " ; just as, " in what is miscalled a limited monarchy, the king may have legal rights which it would be unconstitutional to exercise."

1 See the notes to *Ann.* xiv. 42–45 (with a reference to xiii. 32) in Furneaux' edition (vol. ii., revised by Pelham and Fisher, 1907). In 9 B.C., Ferrero relates, giving a reference to Dion, lv. 5, Augustus approved the passing of a law which authorised the torture of slaves in lawsuits aimed at their masters ; adding that, according to Dion, many people objected to the law. (*The Greatness and Decline of Rome*, vol. v. p. 219.) For illustration of the impression made by autocracy on enlightened men who actually administered the Empire, see Appendix, Note A.

2 Published at Cambridge, 1910.

Thus when, three or four centuries later, the changes we associate with the Christian era were accomplished, it was not Oriental religion and monarchy in their older form that had triumphed over the higher order signified by philosophy and republic, but revolutionary monarchy and revolutionary religion.[1] For a century or so on either side of the arbitrary dividing line, the people chiefly known as propagandists were the Jews and their proselytes. And the name of Christianity came, though not from orthodox Judaism, yet from its offshoot Messianism, of which it is a rendering in Latinised Greek. In what precise manner the new religion assumed the form which we know with growing clearness from the second century onward can only be conjecturally determined. We are confronted with a sacred canon of which the data, be they historical or legendary or mythical, are absolutely unverifiable from external sources for the first century called Christian. And that century was a literary age. Over what period the composition of the canonical literature itself extends is disputed. Some com-

1 The first to grasp the possibility of completing the monarchical by a corresponding religious revolution seems to have been the Syrian youth whose name, identified with that of his God, is known to history as Heliogabalus or, more correctly, Elagabalus. See the thought-provoking study by Mr. J. S. Hay (with an introduction by Professor Bury) entitled *The Amazing Emperor Heliogabalus* (1911). The sole or supreme God was to have borne the name of a Semitic deity worshipped at Emesa, unrepresented by statues, but having for service a gorgeous ritual and the slaughter of innumerable victims. As the reign of Elagabal's High-Priest began in 218 and ended in 222, this attempt at monotheistic unification was nearly a hundred years earlier than the first edict of Constantine in favour of the Christians (313).

petent scholars may be found who place its earliest portions before the year 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed, while others do not allow that anything had received approximately its present form before 120. That nearly all the component parts of the New Testament as we have it now were in existence about 150 is generally allowed. The relations between the Christians and the Roman Empire are unknown till the second century, when a few passing references to them in classical writers, beginning with Tacitus, show that they are hostile.[1] This hostility continued with intermissions till Christianity was adopted as the State-religion in the reign of Constantine, early in the fourth century; but any persecution to which it was subject must have been on the whole very slight compared with the severe persecutions of mediæval and even modern times. As Havet puts it: "It would be absurd to imagine, under the Inquisition, synagogues or Protestant churches constituted as the Christian Church was constituted under the Cæsars: having publicly chiefs, an organisation, finances; brethren coming to aid their brethren in their dungeons; apologists writing and spreading abroad eloquent discourses to prove that their faith ought to be respected."[2]

[1] Who the supposed "Christians" put to death in the reign of Nero were has been found puzzling by ecclesiastics as well as others. Dean Merivale suggested that they were in part Messianic Jews of a fanatical type, who could plausibly be accused of incendiarism, and with whom the real Christians may have been mixed up. In *The Origins of Christianity* (p. 23) I have argued that they were entirely such, Christianity in our sense being not yet existent.

[2] *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, vol. iv. p. 483.

The apologists themselves recognised that without the Empire their propaganda would have been in vain. The Christians as a new race, they said, and the Empire had arisen about the same time. This was part of the providential order. And it was to the chiefs, to Cæsar himself, as they were accustomed to express it, that they appealed. For they too, popular and revolutionary as they might be in origin, were in essence men of authority. From the beginning of their literature they advised those who accepted their teachings to be "subject unto the higher powers." "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." So it was written in words that purported to have been addressed by their great Apostle to the Christians of Rome.

In relation to my present thesis, it is unnecessary to enter at large into the controversies about the beginnings of Christianity. I have written on the subject in a separate work, in which I have tried to combine the position of the late Professor van Manen, that the Pauline Epistles are pseudepigrapha, with Mr. J. M. Robertson's theory that the Gospel-story is in its basis mythical. To those views I adhere; but for the immediate purpose an attitude of sceptical reserve as to the personality of the founder and the authorship of the apostolic literature would suffice. This is on the whole the position of M. Salomon Reinach, who concludes that about the historical Jesus nothing can be affirmed [1]; but that Christianity,

[1] *Orpheus* (1909), 6th ed., p. 332: "Le Jésus historique est propre-

with its rival Mithraism, had its source, at least in part, in old Asiatic religions having for their essential characters the sacrifice of the god and the sacrament or communion.[1]

Here I am concerned mainly, not with the sacrificial and sacramental side of the religion, but with the side on which it connected itself with official Judaism, and claimed to appropriate the theistic philosophy and the philosophical ethics of the Græco-Roman world. For it is on this side that it takes rank as one of the higher religions. Now for the combination of these monotheistic and philosophical elements with the cult there was no need of a unique personality. In fact, it is historically certain that the structure was mostly built up by men of the type of theological doctors, from Paul and John (or the Pauline and Johannine writers) to the Fathers and the Schoolmen. What was primarily needed was no doubt a concrete story to serve as a centre and to impress the popular imagination. The important thing, however, was not that this should be true, but only that it should be placed

ment insaisissable, ce qui ne veut pas dire qu'il n'ait pas existé, mais simplement que nous ne pouvons rien affirmer à son sujet, faute de témoignages remontant sans conteste à ceux qui l'ont vu ou entendu." *Cf.* p. 577 : " Le Christ tel qu'il a pu exister et enseigner nous est inaccessible ; nous n'avons devant nous d'autre réalité concrète que le christianisme, qui s'est divisé en sectes hostiles." In an article included in *Cultes, Mythes et Religions*, M. Reinach finds himself obliged to maintain that the Crucifixion is mythical. See vol. ii., 2nd ed. (1909), pp. 437–442 (" Le verset 17 du Paume xxii ").

[1] *Orpheus*, p. 103 : " La conclusion qui s'impose, c'est que le christianisme et le mithraïsme ont pour source commune, en partie du moins, une ou plusieurs de ces vieilles religions asiatiques dont nous ne connaissons que les formes relativement modernes et qui avaient pour caractères essentiels le sacrifice du dieu et la communion."

beyond the reach of tangible disproof. Whether the belief that the Jewish Messiah had come, and his identification with the sacrificed god who rose again from the dead, took form at first among Jews or in the Hellenistic fringes of the Jewish world, it is perhaps impossible to say. Many Jewish and other points of contact for it have been suggested by Mr. Robertson. Of these I am now inclined to think that the most plausible is the actual fate of the last legitimate King of the Jews—Antigonus, the representative of the Hasmonæan line of high-priests and kings, who was attached to a cross, scourged, and beheaded by order of Mark Antony in the interests of Herod in 37 B.C.[1] In whatever way the story may have originated,[2] it is doubtful whether there was ever any appreciable following of the new sect among the Jews themselves. There is nothing to show that any of the writers of the New Testament were Jews, though the author of the Apocalypse used fragments of Jewish writings. It is now known that the Greek in which the books are written was on the whole the vernacular Greek of the period, coloured by the use of the Septuagint, but not having in itself anything specially Jewish. This has been made out by

1 See the passage from Dio Cassius cited by Th. Reinach, *Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains, etc.*, pp. 186–187. Antigonus, it is related, was the first king to be thus executed by the Romans: compare the passage from Strabo cited at p. 94.

2 Havet, though not going the length of the mythical theory, would account very simply for the belief that the Messiah had appeared. See *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, vol. iv. p. 2: "A force de l'attendre, on finit par croire qu'il avait paru."

investigations of the papyri discovered in Egypt and containing specimens of the familiar interchange of daily life. To write Greek of the classical tradition at that time needed an education in the schools of rhetoric ; and if any of the New Testament writers had this, as they may have had, they for the most part disguised it. The Septuagint itself being predominantly in vernacular Greek, the style of composition of the new sacred literature was fixed by that of the old. Origen compares the procedure of the evangelists to what Plato's might have been had he tried to make himself like a Syrian or an Egyptian in order to win those of inferior culture for philosophic truth.

In tracing out the relation of Christianity to Greece and Judæa, we have always to remember, of course, that there is much in the Christian story not properly either Hellenic or Hebraic, but appealing primordially to the miscellaneous new populations incorporated in the Roman Empire. King-worship and existing Asiatic cults had their influence. The name itself of Jesus Christ, there is reason to suppose, was that of an ancient Semitic god, combined with the title of the Jewish Messiah translated into Greek.[1] By the drama of the Crucifixion,[2] the figure had been mysteriously yet effectively brought down to earth.

[1] Compare, on the positions of Professor W. B. Smith, Appendix, Note B.

[2] Incidentally, Havet narrowly missed the modern theory which makes the story a transcript of a Mystery Play. See *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, iv. p. 260. The narrator of the Passion, he says, " n'a pas pris plus de peine qu'on n'en prend dans une pièce de théâtre pour s'assujettir aux conditions extérieures de la vie."

We can infer from the literature, whichever of the alternative dates we adopt, that by the end of the first century the Christ was worshipped with the attributes of High-Priest, King, Son of God, Saviour, God Manifest, while none the less seeming to realise by his sufferings the symbolic imagination of the ideally just man persecuted, as set forth by Plato in the *Republic*. At the same time, it must be again repeated, there were doctors resolute to lose nothing formally of the Jewish monotheism, and to incorporate all the heathen wisdom of which they could not deny the value. As in the case of Judaism, we cannot succeed in getting back to a stage of inchoate belief before the construction of the elementary dogma. The dogmatic system, indeed, became far more elaborate as time went on; but there is a definite structure from the first. How this came to exist is matter of inference and conjecture, not of direct knowledge.

That is to say, we have no direct knowledge of the first coalescence of the group of practices and beliefs that formed the Christian ritual and dogma. On the other hand, much knowledge exists of the elements by means of which the formation becomes explicable, and that knowledge is increasing. There are, of course, the Jewish and Judæo-Christian apocalypses, which, under new points of view, will doubtless yield more light. And, most important of all as it now appears, there is the literature of the Hellenistic mysteries. Upon this in relation to Christianity,

the recent investigations of Dieterich[1] and of Reitzenstein[2] have taken, or are taking, classical rank. The total result is to give new precision to the view that the primeval element in Christianity was a cult, and that its ritual ideas belong to the part of it that has been described as neither Hellenic nor Hebraic, but Hellenistic. To call them Hellenistic in the specialised sense means that their substance is that of the non-Jewish propagandist religions of the East, bearing the stamp of a Greek terminology. This terminology is technical in its own manner, yet quite distinct from that of philosophy. So far as it could be investigated in Judæo-Christian literature, its distinctive characters had been pretty carefully made out from the philosophical side, and its interaction shown with the terminology of philosophy in the later patristic period.[3] What the new investigations have made manifest is that the usages of Jewish and Christian writers constitute only a particular case within a far wider realm of religious thought. Before Christian Gnosticism and the kindred Jewish developments, there was a generalised Oriental "gnosis." This might for special schools or thinkers go altogether beyond ritual, but it took its start from the ritual ideas involved in the cults of Isis, Attis, Dionysus, Adonis, and especially in that of Mithras, which

1 A. Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (2nd ed., 1910).

2 R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterien-religionen, ihre Grundgedanken und Wirkungen* (1910).

3 In Siebeck's *Geschichte der Psychologie* (i. 2, 1884) the senses of πνεῦμα in Philo and in the Pauline writings are brought clearly into view.

first became prominent at the time when we know authentically that Christianity did, namely, in the second century of our era.[1] The ideas common to these rituals, of the death and resurrection of the god, the sacrament by which his resurrection (as first his death) was participated in, and the "rebirth" that was the process to immortality, were not Jewish at all.[2] And the "gnosis" by which the ritual ideas were to be grasped (or later transcended) never meant rational knowledge, as in philosophy, but always supernatural illumination. The knowledge sought is, in the full expression of which "gnosis" is the abbreviated form, knowledge of God (γνῶσις θεοῦ). Thus out of the popular religions there had sprung what we may call in general terms a search after "enlightenment"; but it was an enlightenment understood with a difference. It was, as we should put it, a theosophy rather than a philosophy. In reality, it was only for the few within the religious communities, and it was in intention guarded from the profane as philosophy never was.[3] Yet it can be correctly said that the central position acquired by the new elements absorbed into Christianity was the result of a "revolution from below."[4] Association between philosophical enlightenment and the politically organised civic

1 *Cf.* Dieterich, *op. cit.*, p. 46: "Nach 100 erst beginnt die stärkere und alsbald rapide Ausbreitung des Mithrasdienstes."

2 More guardedly, it ought perhaps to be said, not officially Jewish.

3 The authors I am referring to do not state this explicitly; but illustrations of the point of view are not infrequent in the New Testament.

4 Dieterich, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–108,

cults gave place to the beginnings of an alliance between the rising monarchies and the religious feeling of the masses.[1] The principal, though not the only, source for the Christian form of this gnosis, this "wisdom among the perfect,"[2] which rises above the popular religions, yet springs out of them by a series of stages, is the Pauline epistolary literature. Paul, as both Dieterich and Reitzenstein find, moves essentially in the circle of ideas which has been recovered for us in its "heathen" form in the Hermetic literature and in the "magical" papyri.[3] It is on this side that explanation is to be sought, the Christian ideas being, not original, but derivative. "For the chief propositions of Pauline as of Johannine theology, in any case the basis of Judaism is wanting."[4]

Although I had not thought of returning here to the question as to the authorship of the Pauline Epistles, I cannot help remarking how much these researches confirm retrospectively the position I have adopted from Van Manen. And the confirmation becomes all the stronger because the

1 Reitzenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

2 *Cf.* 1 Cor. ii. 6 : σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις.

3 This literature, as a whole, is assigned to a period from about the opening of the Christian era to a time not later than 300.

4 Dieterich, *op. cit.*, p. 179 ; *cf.* Reitzenstein, pp. 57–58. Schopenhauer has drawn attention to the singularly un-Jewish character of an expression in the Epistle of James, "the wheel of birth" (τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως, iii. 6), to which he would ascribe an Indian origin. This, however, is also Orphic : compare Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*. The literature of Orphism might be described as an early phase of the gnosis. And the true account of the origin of Indian philosophy as an independent movement may be that it, too, began in a kind of gnosis, which got free instead of becoming subjected to Church and creed as in the West.

writers apparently do not know or have not been interested in the newer Dutch criticism, but take for granted that the author of the Epistles was the Jew of Tarsus. Yet a considerable part of Van Manen's case was the influence evident in them of what he also called the "non-Jewish Eastern gnosis." It might indeed be suggested as a possible answer that, since the sources of this gnosis are by the new researches traced further back, the historical Paul[1] of the first century may very well have been a recipient of the influence. To this the reply is that the Paul who wrote the doctrinal parts of the Epistles had not merely been influenced by the Hellenistic Oriental gnosis, but was absolutely steeped in it. He thinks in its terms, and—as experts in Rabbinic literature, as if to complete the case, have told us from the other side—not at all as an orthodox Jew of that or any time could ever have thought. This means that the framework of the Epistles is incompatible with their contents; for in them Paul is made to describe himself, just as in the Acts of the Apostles, as a Jew of the Jews. To expel all such passages would be to destroy the bond of personality, real or dramatised, by which the literature is in fact held together. Therefore, so far as anything of the kind can be demonstrated, it seems to me that that literature is demonstrably pseudepigraphic.

1 Van Manen also believes in a "historical Paul"—a missionary propagandist of the first century, one of whose travelling companions wrote the diary preserved, with editorial additions, in the journey-narrative taken up into the Acts of the Apostles.

For this view I find incidental support in Professor Schmiedel's extremely clear-sighted article in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* on "Simon Magus." The Tübingen theory is well known, according to which the Simon Magus of the pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions*—romances composed in the third or fourth century, but going back to older sources—was a caricature of the great Apostle by his Judaising enemies. Van Manen suggested that this theory, in its extreme developments, had become itself something of a romance; but these excesses Schmiedel has swept away. What he is able to show without any doubt is that among the sources of the Clementines were attacks on the Pauline theology and on the life-story of Paul as set forth by himself or his admirers. These attacks are as palpable as some that have survived in the New Testament.[1] And they are of a remarkably minute kind. Modern writers have been struck over and over again with the way in which Paul, as some have expressed it, celebrates his own apotheosis. This, again, was part of Van Manen's case. It had aroused the scepticism of Havet. And Reitzenstein, commenting on passages where the Apostle seems to glorify himself as the ideal "spiritual" man, beyond the judgment of friend and foe alike, observes that he "claims a position

1 See the verses cited by Schmiedel (*Ency. Bib.*, vol. iv. col. 4545) from Rev. ii.; and compare Jude 19 (cited col. 4542, *n.*). In this verse οἱ ἀποδιορίζοντες [not ἑαυτούς] are "they who make a division" (between "psychics" and "pneumatics"), like Paul and the Gnostics.

which we can only with difficulty make comprehensible to ourselves."[1] It is in fact as if some actual Stoic had put himself forward as already the ideal sage.[2] Now Schmiedel brings out not only that these very passages are objects of attack in the Clementines,[3] but even that the style of Paul is imitated in a mocking way.[4] He has also made it very plausible that passages in the Epistles are replies to such attacks.[5] Yet since the historical Paul belongs to the first century, and only oral sources of the Clementines can be supposed before the second, the assumption is admittedly necessary that this anti-Pauline polemic went through a period of oral transmission before it was written down. Here I do not see how the case as it stands can be maintained. About the parody of the Pauline style there is no doubt; but this, in its minuteness, extending to particles, I find unimaginable except as a literary attack made in literary form from the first. All difficulty vanishes if we no longer regard the historical Paul, but only the Epistles attributed to him, as the object of attack, and if we place these in the early part of the second century. It was then, we must suppose, that the quarrels were going on between Paulinists and the Judaising parties. Fragments of the anti-Pauline polemic

1 *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

2 In describing himself in Stoic language as having been a "proficient" in Judaism (Gal. i. 14), Paul does not go beyond what might have been said; but here the passage is incongruous in another way, since he is also represented as a Jew by birth.

3 *Ency. Bib.*, vol. iv. col. 4541.

4 *Ibid.*, col. 4543.

5 *Ibid.*, cols. 4542, 4549.

were embedded in Judæo-Christian documents like the Apocalypse, the Epistle of Jude, and the second-century sources of the Clementines; all of which were little posterior to the "Epistles of Paul" themselves. Later in the second century, as Schmiedel convincingly shows, the attacks became impossible, because the Apostle had then been received within the Catholic system of compromise. All vestiges of the conflict, however, could not be destroyed.

As I have been led so far to restate and support one position not actually necessary for the present purpose, I will return also for a moment to the mythical theory of the Gospel-story. The result of reflection on this is that I do not see how Mr. Robertson's or Professor Arthur Drews' position[1] can be permanently sustained without the adoption of Van Manen's theory also. No doubt there is a certain plausibility, Paul being taken as hypothetically a writer of the first century, in arguing that a Christ imagined by him as so entirely phantasmal and supernatural a figure could not possibly have been a human contemporary of his. I, too, find the transformation of an actual person whom Paul, the rabbinically trained Jew, knew to have lived and died in Palestine, into the "Christ Jesus" of the Epistles unthinkable. I will go further and say that I never found the chapter on the Resurrection in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, rhetorically fine as it is in part, intelligible as even the most

[1] *Die Christusmythe*, 1910.

halting argument of any individual mind. As a cento, made up partly of the beginnings of "evidential" Christianity, partly of "eschatological hopes," but most of all and predominantly of Hellenistic spiritualism, it can on the whole be understood.[1] Thus, if I were to postulate a basis for the Epistles in writings of the actual Apostle, I should, with Mr. Robertson and others, regard that famous chapter as seriously interpolated. This, however, does not seem to me enough. The fact remains that the personal Paul who figures in the Epistles is a Jew brought up in Jewish learning and the contemporary of Jesus and of apostles who were before him. On the whole, this representation is too deep-going to be got rid of except by the most drastic expulsions. If even the "principal Epistles" are from a Paul who was a Christian teacher of the first century, there remains apparent testimony to the concrete reality of other apostles and of Jesus himself as having lived in that century.[2] If the Epistles go, the last apparent testimony

1 Compare Reitzenstein (*op. cit.*, p. 202), by whom the difficulty of reconciliation is very well put.

2 In *Pagan Christs*, 2nd ed. (1911), Mr. Robertson replies to this objection as put in the *Hibbert Journal* from the traditionalist side. Undoubtedly he succeeds in showing that this testimony, like the rest, is of a very shadowy kind; but not, I think, in making it positively intelligible as coming from a contemporary of rival "apostles" who also knew no concrete Jesus. The most natural explanation, for example, of 2 Cor. v. 16 (where Paul repudiates henceforth all knowledge of Christ *κατὰ σάρκα*) seems to be either (1) that it is a setting aside by the actual Paul of those who had known the living Jesus, or (2) that it is a championship, by Paulinists of the second century, of the apostle who confessedly had not "known Christ after the flesh" against the claims of others who, according to the legend, had been his disciples. Any other interpretation seems strained. For myself, I adhere to the second.

of the kind goes with them. And only then, I think, can the mass of positive evidence for mythical sources of the Gospels produce its full effect.[1]

But, to return to certainties from what will not yet by the majority of critics be accepted as such, there is one thing in the origins of Christianity of which we have direct knowledge. Whatever Hellenistic elements may have gone to constitute its ritual and myth, it succeeded in attaching itself formally to Judaism. The whole conception of a Church, as Reitzenstein notes,[2] is fundamentally not Hellenistic. The doctrine of the Christian Church may have been in substance non-Jewish; but the theocratic idea of Christendom was taken over immediately from its Jewish predecessors. Without the destruction of Jerusalem, the claim of an intolerant cosmopolitan theocracy, directly founded on the legislation against unfaithful Jews in the Book of Deuteronomy, would have been barred out from the first. The legitimate priesthood of the Temple could without difficulty have thrust aside what it regarded as the upstart faith. In the actual circumstances, full practice of the Jewish Law as laid down in the Mosaic Code having been

1 It may be well to add that I did not myself take up the position of Van Manen for the reason that it seemed to be required by the mythical theory, but had accepted it earlier. Van Manen himself had not arrived at that theory, though he assumed only the very slightest and most colourless outline of the Gospel-story, and this rather as not within the range of his special investigation than as having passed any test such as he applied to the Epistles.

2 *Op. cit.*, p. 94.

rendered impossible, those who claimed to be "the Israel of God" could introduce a discipline of their own, admitting the rest of the world on the sole terms of belief in a newly framed dogma. Thus the Jewish propaganda was for ever superseded. The remnant could only fall back on isolation to preserve its nationality. It even cast aside what perfectly orthodox Jews had written in Greek, and, abandoning this to the Christians, returned for itself to a scholastic form of the old sacred language. The Romans, however, did not forget whence the Christians had come, and among those who looked back to the ancient ideal of civic culture regret was finally bitter that Judæa had ever been conquered and Jerusalem destroyed.

> Atque utinam nunquam Iudæa subacta fuisset
> Pompeii bellis imperioque Titi!
> Latius excisæ pestis contagia serpunt,
> Victoresque suos natio victa premit.[1]

[1] Rutilius Namatianus, in a poem dated A.D. 416, cited by Th. Reinach, *Textes, etc.*, pp. 358–360.

# CHAPTER VIII

## CHRISTIANITY AND PHILOSOPHY

As I am not writing a history of religions, but only noting some applications of a point of view which I think has already been made clear, I will not dwell further at present on the development of the theocratic idea. The process by which Rome itself, instead of Jerusalem, became the centre of a new theocracy is written in general history, and for the most part does not need conjectural deduction.[1] What we have to bear in mind is this : that numerous as are the elements of Græco-Roman culture that entered into Christianity, theocracy came from Judæa. It may be said, and has been said, by way of apology

[1] So far as the Roman theocracy was founded on the supposed residence of the Apostle Peter at Rome, Professor Schmiedel has shown once for all that its basis was from the first simply fiction worked in the interests of the Church. See his articles on "Simon Peter" and "Simon Magus" (which should be read in this order) in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*. The demonstration of its nullity is independent of the account which he conjecturally gives of the origin of the fiction ; as this again, with some modification, might be made independent of the question whether Simon Peter, the "rock" apostle, or his supposed antagonist, Simon, the magician of Samaria, ever existed in historical reality. It would be interesting to discuss these problems further ; but I limit myself here to citing Professor Schmiedel's comment on the whole development. This, he says (*Ency. Bib.*, vol. iv. col. 4621), "is seen to present a perversion of historical truth such as it would be almost impossible to surpass, and which throws a lurid light upon the hostility to history, as well as upon the power, of the idea of a Catholic Church."

for the intolerance of the Hebrew sacred books, that this belonged only to the dream of dominion in a people for most of its time suffering oppression; but the dream was realised to the full by the successors who adopted the books as their own, and the will to realise it was inspired from that source. Still, I quite recognise that only the smallest part of the responsibility falls on the Jews. Plato, in the *Laws* written in his declining years, had set forth a scheme of religious persecution; but this was simply ignored by his own followers to the end of classical antiquity. In the ancient world, it can be said, intolerance was never systematised, but remained only of the sporadic kind with which serious innovators must always expect to meet. If the Christian Church had so chosen, it could have set aside the persecuting elements in the Hebrew Scriptures as easily as the Platonists ignored or argumentatively opposed their master's legislation on religion or art.

In the ethical sense in which it is sometimes opposed to "paganism," Christianity was prepared in its detail far more by later Græco-Roman antiquity than by Judaism.[1] This does not apply, indeed, to the distinctive moral precepts

[1] See Havet, *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, iii. p. 465: "Si nous ne sommes plus aujourd'hui ce que nous appelons païens, dans le mauvais sens du mot, nous le devons avant tout au travail de la sagesse hellénique." *Cf.* p. 492: "Le christianisme, quoique juif dans la forme, est hellénique dans son fond." Bruno Bauer (with whose work I am very slightly acquainted) has gone so far as to speak of Christianity, in this aspect, as "a Græco-Roman phenomenon in a Jewish mask."

of the Synoptic Gospels, which sprang out of a generalising direction within Judaism itself, and were in great part formulated in terms verbally identical with precepts in the Old Testament. Even in the Gospels, however, points of contact have been found with an external religious movement so remote in origin as Buddhism.[1] There are also curious resemblances to sayings of philosophers as recorded in Diogenes Laertius ; and of course the collection that goes by that name, though later in date, depends on sources much older than the Gospels. If there was borrowing, it was unquestionably on the Judæo-Christian side. Even the very slight sympathetic references in writers of the Græco-Roman tradition that have been generally assumed to show knowledge of Jewish literature do not indicate this with any certainty.[2] Whatever may be the case with one writer or another here and there, we must regard the classical tradition as practically im-

[1] See G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, *Indische Einflüsse auf Evangelische Erzählungen*, 2nd ed. (German translation of a Dutch work), 1909.

[2] Two of these I have myself taken for granted ; namely, the reference in the treatise *On the Sublime* to the impressiveness of the creation of light as described at the opening of the Book of Genesis, and the comparison of Plato to Moses by Numenius of Apamea. Regarding the first, Mr. Benn pointed out to me that Mommsen holds the writer of the treatise to have been, not a pagan, but a Hellenising Jew. M. Théodore Reinach does not mention this, but has the following note on the passage (*op. cit.*, pp. 114–115) : " Le commentateur Schurzfleisch (Wittenberg, 1711) a supposé ingénieusement que l'auteur n'a pas puisé directement dans les Septante, mais dans le traité du *Sublime* de son prédécesseur Cécilius, qu'il cite à diverses reprises. Ce Cécilius, de Calacté en Sicile, qui professa à Rome sous Auguste, passait pour Juif." At p. 175 he also expresses doubt as to the authenticity of the saying attributed to Numenius by Clement of Alexandria : " What is Plato but Moses writing Attic ? "

permeable on that side. Jewish and Christian doctors, on the other hand, were determined, in a phrase that exactly expresses their point of view, to "take their own where they found it."

The period in which the modernised ideal of conduct and feeling that has received the name of Christian grew up was the period in which the separate nationalities and city-States were reduced to constituent parts of a world-empire. It grew up largely, though not wholly, in the philosophic schools. In conflict accompanied by eclectic choice, the eccentricities and extravagances of individual teachers disappeared; and by the end of the second century of the Christian era the passage to what we call the modern type was practically complete within the ancient system of culture. What marks the new ethical model is stress on the virtues of kindness, forbearance, abstinence in all its forms, humility, forgiveness. It has even been thought excessive in this direction, like Christianity itself, which arose in the new moral atmosphere. Ernest Havet, in the first two volumes of *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*,[1] has traced out its formation with the hand of a master. Here he was not, as in the latter part of his work, simply a pioneer, but was writing from fulness of knowledge and finished accomplishment. The literature from which the history has to be reconstructed, as he points out, consists of relatively small remains of a large mass of work. Nevertheless, from what has been

[1] 3rd ed., 1880.

preserved, it can be shown that Hellenism included in its development all that is customarily called in the best sense Christianity. And of Hellenism this is only a part. Taken as a whole, Hellenism is more and greater than Christianity. Havet's idea here suggests that which has been brought out recently with philosophic generality by Professor Carveth Read, who has noted, both in *The Metaphysics of Nature* and in *Natural and Social Morals*, how the ethics of the city-State, as formulated by Plato and Aristotle, had a real superiority over the later cosmopolitan philosophies in its stress on the full achievement of what can be accomplished by the best faculties cultivated to their highest point. Thus it allows room for differences of "moral races," in contrast with the effaced character of an ideal consisting in mere "innocence" or absence of fault.[1]

I return now to the more distinctively religious development; and here it can be shown without difficulty how at a stroke Greek philosophy in nearly its earliest phase transcended all that can

[1] See especially *The Metaphysics of Nature*, pp. 350–351. This is so important that I must quote the early part of the passage, though it is a little off the line of the present argument. "The attempt to set up the same ideal for all men is one of the greatest errors of philosophy. Social life is not to be understood except as constituted by different species of men,—not merely ethnological but moral species. The differentiation of the human stock into such species is due (apart from ethnological causes) in a superficial way to the division of labour, but more profoundly to congenital differences of capacity and disposition. This was recognised by Plato and Aristotle, but obscured by Stoicism and other forces; so that it may now seem pagan and invidious, whereas it is merely humanity and common sense" (p. 350). Nietzscheanism may perhaps be best understood as a violent and exaggerated protest on behalf of this truth against the equally exaggerated Neo-Christianity of Tolstoy. Catholic Christianity to some extent recognises it.

be claimed for Judaism and Christianity together. For how could the claim be most favourably put ? It might be said that a purely spiritual conception of Deity was fixed by the former, and that animal sacrifices were abolished by the latter. Rigorously the claim is unsustainable in either case. In Judaism the Deity was so nationalised that some of the Christian Gnostics regarded Jehovah as a usurping Demiurge, to be dethroned by Jesus Christ, who came for that end as an emanation from the highest God. And some forms of Oriental Christianity still retain animal sacrifices. In the West, Christianity was influenced by the Neo-Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic campaign against them ; and this, which furnished the Christians with weapons against the pagan rites as commonly practised, was more radical than any attack from their own resources could have been.[1] The philosophers not only denied in principle that blood-sacrifice has any value, but declared it actually evil. To them the faith of Abraham, as shown in the preparations for the sacrifice of Isaac, which is the subject of panegyric in the New Testament, would have meant only willingness to propitiate a demon in the hope of material advantage. And the whole movement had been anticipated by Heraclitus, who thus speaks against popular religion among his contemporaries five centuries before the Christian era : " They vainly

1 *Cf.* Havet, *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, ii. p. 234 : " Car ce n'est pas le judaïsme apparemment qui a appris aux chrétiens à ne pas faire d'un temple une boucherie,"

purify themselves by defiling themselves with blood, just as if one who had stepped into the mud were to wash his feet in mud. Any man who marked him doing thus would deem him mad. And they pray to these images, as if one were to talk with a man's house, knowing not what gods or heroes are."[1] No depreciation of blood-sacrifice by any Hebrew prophet or psalmist goes as far as this; while Christian theology is itself founded on the belief, definitely formulated, that "without shedding of blood is no remission."[2]

Early opponents of Christianity were not slow to point to such anticipations of what Jews and Christians declared to be truths revealed to them, upon whom the ends of the world were come. By Celsus the saying of Heraclitus, along with the rejection of statues in the old Persian religion, was urged against the claim of Judaism to originality in its condemnation of idolatry. In practice, however, the actual cults had to be defended by official opponents of the new revelation which proposed to sweep them away. And, while it did this not ostensibly in deference to philosophical ideas, but in order to make room for its own system of rites, the practical issue was the same. More archaic though the Christian sacrament might be in its inner meaning than official Hellenism, "deicide and theophagy" were yet so reduced in it to symbolical form that, with the

[1] Given by Diels as Fragment 5. Burnet adopts Professor Bywater's arrangement, in which the sentences appear as Fragments 129, 130, 126; translating in the words given above.

[2] Heb. ix. 22 (*χωρὶς αἱματεκχυσίας οὐ γίνεται ἄφεσις*).

aid of the philosophical ideas, it could expel actual bloodshed from what is still called the altar. Thus there is some ground, though not so much as is usually supposed, for treating the later paganism as reactionary. Neo-Platonism had absorbed the Pythagorean movement ; Porphyry, who wrote against Christianity, had also continued the attack upon animal sacrifices ; and doubtless if no rivals had appeared to the ancient gods, blood-sacrifice would have disappeared from their rites by commutations into innocent offerings such as flowers and fruits. Yet Julian, himself a Neo-Platonist, when he re-established the old religion against the new, had to revive the old ritual. And his friend Sallustius, in the treatise *De Diis et Mundo*, formally defends the sacrifice of animal victims. Had the attempt at revival succeeded, the result could only have been a more sacerdotal paganism ; though, in contrast with the system established by the Church, philosophical liberty would have been preserved.

In the reformed paganism, as it can be inferred from the writings of Julian and Sallustius, the apotheosis of the Emperors would have been disused for ever. The monarchy would have been that of the Antonines, worked in as republican a spirit as possible, and repudiating " Cæsarism." In the religion of the Empire the place of Christ as God and King would have been taken by the Sun (ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἥλιος), in whose worship the Emperor was to be the representative of the State ; but the national religions, including that of the

Jews,[1] would all have been encouraged within their own limits. Christianity was to be tolerated, but officially discouraged. Within the churches the "heretics" were to be protected from the persecutions of the "Catholics." The doctrine at the summit, alike for Celsus and for Julian, is pure theism, with "rewards and punishments in a future state." Cudworth, as a speculative theologian familiar with the writings of the school to which Julian belonged, understood his position better than Gibbon; proving at length that he was not in his serious doctrine a polytheist. The myths, according to the Stoic tradition continued by Neo-Platonism, were to be allegorised in an edifying and philosophical manner. Thus the gods would have become a hierarchy of spiritual existences distinguishable in name only from the angelic hierarchies of which the theory was formulated by the Platonising Christian who wrote under the name of "Dionysius the Areopagite." But—what Julian supremely cared for—the literature and thought of antiquity would have been preserved in the natural surroundings of the life out of which they had grown, and humanistic civilisation would have continued without break. To him monotheism, which he formally accepted as much as his opponents, was no revolution, but the ordinary doctrine of the philosophic tradition

1 Doubts have been expressed regarding the genuineness of the letter included in the correspondence of Julian as Ep. 25: see Th. Reinach, *Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains, etc.*, p. 209, *n.* On the whole, however, the tone of favour to the Jewish community does not seem stronger than the Emperor would have adopted in a public letter.

he followed. To set polytheism as such against Judæo-Christian monotheism was no part of his interest or of the cause to which he gave himself.

What makes this more important and significant historically is that the pure theism of the pagan apologists is in no way esoteric. It has indeed a kind of official character; but behind this the reserve is not in favour of a belief, more or less serious, in the literal truth of the popular stories, but implies a philosophy scarcely amounting to theism in the ordinary sense. The official monotheism, that is to say, itself contains something of popular accommodation. Thus Julian, in his philosophic writings, holds strongly to the position that the world has neither beginning nor end. It is only in his books against the Christians that he appears to substitute the creative God of the *Timæus*, taken literally, for the creative God of Moses. And Celsus, while he, too, is a Platonist, combines with his spiritualist theism a tinge of naturalism suggesting that he has read Lucretius with admiration. The theism itself differs from that of the Christians only in being without reserve universalist. Julian, for example, although he advises participation in the mysteries as a pious custom, repudiates, as no orthodox Christian could even now officially, the notion that participation or non-participation makes any difference to the fate of the soul. That depends wholly upon conduct. But again there is something in this of State-dogma. Gibbon, accordingly, while taking too much as serious doctrine Julian's

æsthetic and political sympathies with Greek polytheism, doubts whether personal immortality was part of his philosophic creed. Origen, too, on the Christian side, has some reservations at which he barely hints. It is known from his work *On Principles* that he believed in a series of world-cycles, and that he regarded no state of reward or punishment or condition of any spirit in the universe as final. Yet from his books against Celsus, written no doubt with an eye on the simple-minded among the faithful, we might suppose that he believed even those heathens whom he was following in philosophy to be everlastingly damned. There was on both sides in religion something of the distinction between doctrines for the many and for the few.[1] All that I insist on is that ethical theism was now not a matter of dispute, but a sort of common dogma. Both sides alike were able to use it to discredit the elements of myth and ritual in the system of their antagonists.

The distinction between "kinds of truth" was to be revived later in an exaggerated form; but we come now to the time when no doctrine

1 I have perhaps allowed insufficiently for this in my account of the controversy between Celsus and Origen (*Apollonius of Tyana and other Essays*, 1906); taking, it may be, some of Origen's replies, addressed "to the gallery," too seriously. Unfortunately his treatise Περὶ ἀρχῶν, by which the correction should be made, exists, apart from Greek extracts with an edifying purpose, only in the manipulated translation of Rufinus. Rufinus, however, in stating definitely that he had brought the work nearer to what he supposed to be orthodoxy, dealt with his author more honestly than one of the translators of Kant, J. W. Semple, who in 1838 published a materially falsified rendering of his book on Religion, without any notice to the reader that he was not translating exactly.

but that which was taught authoritatively to the many was allowed to find utterance at all. Origen himself is said to have been placed among the damned by a Church Council. In 529, the Church having triumphed over all opposition, the philosophic schools at Athens were closed by Justinian. The history is familiar, and I do not propose to rewrite it ; but at this point there may be some interest in noting the formulated position of philosophy in defeat and old age.[1] It is stated by Damascius in his Life of Isidorus, of which excerpts are preserved by Photius :[2] " He showed plainly that he did not love the present order (*τὰ παρόντα, i.e.*, Christianity), nor yet was willing to worship statues ; but that his endeavour was now towards the gods themselves concealed within, not in shrines, but in the ineffable itself, whatsoever it is, of entire incognisance." [3] Here, while Christianity is repudiated, there is an approximation to its more spiritual expressions. We are reminded of the " unknown God " of the Acts of the Apostles. And in some such formula no doubt terms of agreement were found with thinkers nominally Christian who were indifferent to the controversies of the period about the Trinity and the Incarnation.

On these it is a commonplace of historical criticism that Greek philosophy had a far-reaching influence. Indeed, it has been blamed for raising

1 Damascius, *Vita Isidori*, 227 : *ἀλλὰ τοῦτο συμβέβηκε νῦν ἐπὶ ξυροῦ ἑστάναι οὐ τῆς ἀκμῆς, τοῦ δὲ ἐσχάτου γήρως ὡς ἀληθῶς.*

2 See the appendix to the Didot edition of Diogenes Laertius.

3 *Vita Isidori*, 38.

them; though clearly philosophy itself had nothing to do with the selection of the story on which it was employed as an instrument by Christian theologians. For what remained of the ancient schools, the whole development on the Judæo-Christian line, from Philo to Clement and Origen, and on to later Fathers, was non-existent. Plotinus, it is true, wrote a book against the Gnostics, but only on a philosophical position of theirs, that the Maker of this world is evil; and the Gnostics, with their avowed pessimism, were repudiated by the orthodox Christians. These indeed found some aid afterwards from the Neo-Platonic philosophy; but chiefly in giving more exactitude to the definition of the immaterial soul. The refutation of materialism was the legacy to them of the school. They did not derive their theology from it, the Neo-Platonic Trinity being an entirely different conception from theirs.

Of the origin of its monotheism in rational speculation and not in a popular story or a local cult, the modern Catholic Church has preserved some sense. Thus its most authorised exponents undertake to furnish demonstrative proof of theism, while recognising that when the distinctive doctrines of its theology are reached the appeal must be to faith. In a controversy of some years ago I met with an illustration which now, as it recurs, suggests that the theological experts distinguish in their own minds between what they take to be the real truth in a revealed religion

and the particular stories with which it has been combined. It was admitted by Father Clarke, S.J., in replying to the late St. George Mivart, that a rather eccentric but quite orthodox theologian might have given leave to some one who consulted him on the point, to worship God, if he preferred, under the form of the Greek Apollo rather than the Jewish Jehovah, provided only that he did not morally approve of the character of the god as represented in the mythological stories. And, at the very beginning of the controversy between Christians and pagans, there was one point in common that seems to go beyond even this. Celsus and Origen agree that the highest worship is only of the mind, and needs no rites and ceremonies ; that the external form of a religion, in short, is only for those who cannot rise above imagery to philosophical contemplation.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE THEOLOGICAL SCHISMS

From the seeming close of ancient culture in the fixation of the theocratic Empire, the means by which the intellectual life of Europe renewed itself was a series of schisms. These were first political and then theological.

Within a century from Constantine, who had made of Byzantium the seat of sovereignty and called it after his name, the Roman Empire became divided into East and West, each ruled by its own autocrat. Of the Eastern Empire the new Rome, or Constantinople, was the capital; of the Western, the old Rome. The year 476 is taken by historians as marking the fall of the Western Empire under the barbarian irruptions which had continued since the second century; but the theory was that the Emperor of the East now resumed jurisdiction over the whole. In the meantime, while new kingdoms, theoretically subordinated to Constantinople, were being shaped out of the Teutonic conquests, the absence of a supreme political authority at Rome gave the ecclesiastical power its opportunity for establishing a centralised "spiritual" domination including under it in theory all "secular" States. At the

end of the eighth century the Papacy, in its own interests, set up a new rival Empire, which claimed to inherit the political authority of the ancient Roman State as a complete unity, and was called the Holy Roman Empire. The Emperors, however, soon showed themselves the rivals of the Popes; for there were now two powers in the same territory claiming, each in its own manner, universal authority. On the one side was the Vicar of Christ; on the other side a new Cæsar, himself the consecrated chief of sovereigns who all came to be regarded by their partisans as ruling by divine right. The victory in the conflict rested on the whole with the Popes; till the secular power, not of the Empire which was their creation, but of the new national monarchies, became strong enough to get the better of ecclesiastical dictation in detail. As landmarks for the further history we may just recall to mind that the Empire of the East, though its dominions had been gradually retrenched, did not come to an end till 1453, when Constantinople was taken by the Turks; and that the Holy Roman Empire, though long reduced to a shadow, was not formally abolished till 1806.

Of the theological schisms, the division between Greek or Eastern and Latin or Western Christianity became practically complete in the ninth century. Nominally the points in dispute were theological subtleties, but in reality the division marked a difference of political types. In the East an autocrat ruled as the chief of a theocratic State to whom the Patriarch of Constantinople was

subordinate. In the West the Pope claimed spiritual sovereignty over all Christendom, while the kings held the secular or temporal sovereignty in their own dominions. Meanwhile, through the rise of Mohammed in Arabia as the prophet of the new faith of Islam, North Africa, Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, and even portions of Europe, were torn from their union with the rest of the Roman Empire, to which they had all once belonged, and became part of the dominions of the Caliphs, Eastern and Western. The year from which the religion of Mohammed dates its annals is 622 of the Christian era ; and within a century of this most of the Arabian conquests were effected. In its utmost extent, if Islam has gone eastward somewhat beyond the bounds ever reached by Roman dominion, it has not gone much beyond the conquests of Alexander, and is quite rightly included by Comte in the spiritual unity of the West (in the larger sense), as we shall see. To anticipate again on later history, the schism in Western Christendom which has divided it into Catholic and Protestant nations may be dated from the revolt against the Papacy started by Luther in 1517. There were many rebellions premonitory of this from the twelfth century onward ; but, for want of sufficiently favourable political circumstances, all had been crushed out.

The broadest and deepest of the divisions theologically is between Islam and Christendom ; and yet clearly a certain unity remains. All the religions recognise ethical monotheism at the

summit. And this, as we have seen, had also become official in later pagan antiquity. The distinction of Islam is to be by far the largest creation of a great external order by an individual prophet as man of action. While the earlier prophets to whom such creations were ascribed are legendary or mythical, Mohammed stands out with perfect clearness in the light of history. And the process by which the religion was built up is relatively simple and intelligible. Arabia in the time of Mohammed retained the early Semitic polytheism, but had been permeated by some knowledge of Judaism and Christianity. The Prophet, through contact with the foreign doctrines, felt himself seized upon by the idea of divine unity ; and this in him led to a powerful reaction in favour of simplification as against what had become the practical polytheism of established Christianity, with its Trinitarian theology, its image-worship, and its new pantheon of saints. The result was a return towards the Judaic type, but without the complications of ritual that had stood in the way of its universality. Islam was thus in essence a sect within the Judæo-Christian group, with a much simplified cult and an immensely reduced mythology. As a popular religion, it could not, of course, be entirely without sacred stories and a ritual of its own. The sacred stories were adopted by the Prophet from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. These he treated as revelations preparatory of his own. The ritual, in so far as it was of native Arabian origin,

seems to have been imposed by the conservatism of usage, which, in view of practical exigencies, he could not disregard. The ideal was a theocratic dominion under a conquering chief of the faithful; but the interpreters of the faith never came to constitute strictly a priesthood like that of the ancient East, of Judæa, or of the Catholic forms of Christianity. In Islam the clergy are analogous rather to the Jewish Rabbis or to a Protestant ministry. Jews and Christians, but not "idolators," were to be tolerated on certain terms. In mediæval theory this toleration became reciprocal among the religions that professed in common a formal monotheism and claimed to possess a written revelation. Within each system toleration was, of course, not extended to heretics or freethinkers; and neither Christianity nor Islam conceded to those who had once professed it the right to fall off to another faith.

If any one desired to illustrate at once the saying of Heraclitus that war is the father of all things and the Hegelian interpretation of "dying to live" as applied to the products of the human spirit, the fortunes of Greek philosophy in its transference from the Byzantine to the Islamic Empire, and thence to the Catholic West, would form an excellent subject. We have seen how the Neo-Platonic philosophy, before the exile of its last professors, had passed into a mystical agnosticism. The phase that followed was a return from metaphysical speculation to positive science as far as that existed in antiquity, and to

occupation with the works of Aristotle as the best scientific encyclopædia extant. It was in this last age of the commentators, as Renan showed in his *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, that the position was assigned to Aristotle of "the master of those who know."[1] When the Arabians had had time to organise their conquests, their curiosity was excited by the arts and knowledge accumulated by their predecessors. Greek science was sought out first in translations that had been made into Syriac; from these, translations into Arabic were procured. As one part of ancient culture, the men of learning and science among the Arabians met with philosophy, Aristotle being presented to them as the great authority here also, as in the special sciences. Thus a small group came to devote itself to philosophical inquiries pursued by means of the Arabic translations just referred to. The movement that sprang from this first faint revival lasted from the ninth to the twelfth century. It exceeded in originality, if we except the *De Divisione Naturæ* of John Scotus Erigena, anything that was done in Western Europe in the same period; and in his case, too, it was Greek thought that had been reawakened to life, though the process was somewhat different. The early Arabians began with science and, like their successors, used only translations. Their contemporary Erigena (born in Ireland, as the name indicates) was one of the last in Western

1 *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, 3rd ed. (1867), p. 93: "Là est le moment décisif où l'autorité philosophique se constitue pour plus de dix siècles,"

Europe, before the Humanist revival, to know Greek; but the writers he studied were not the heathen commentators occupied with science, but the later Christian theologians influenced by the mystical side of Neo-Platonism. Different as the starting-points were, he represented as essentially rationalising an effort as did any of the Arabians in the succession of four centuries. And from him as well as from them came afterwards the stimulus to the heterodox Scholastics of the twelfth century. His fate, early in the thirteenth century, was to be condemned by a Pope to an oblivion that lasted till late in the seventeenth, when a copy of his great work that had escaped destruction was recovered at Oxford. Theirs was to be silenced under the popular fanaticism which the Mohammedan clergy were able to stir up; but the impulse had been transmitted through the Crusades, and the thought of the West went on in spite of all.

The most singular product of their thought is the doctrine of the "double truth," afterwards taken over and handed down in Europe, as a convenient formula for freethinkers, till the seventeenth century. They derived it, no doubt, from germs in the authors they read; perhaps from the phrase in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* about the stories that have been added to the truth concerning God "for the persuasion of the multitude"; but they gave it a much more pointed and paradoxical form. Their difficulty in openly following their Greek master was that he denied the creation

of the world; for this had been received from Judaism by Mohammedan as by Christian theology. Also it was clear to them that no doctrine of personal immortality was to be found in Aristotle. On immortality they developed, partly by a modification of the Neo-Platonic pantheism, which they had met with in some of the treatises they read, an extremely interesting and original theory of their own. It is only the general human mind, they held, that endures. The individual manifestations of this in time and space disappear. The one "active intellect," as they called it, of man is eternal, being an emanation of Deity; and the total system of things within which it is manifested has neither beginning nor end. This is the doctrine that results from philosophical reason. But how were such positions to be reconciled with ostensible acceptance of theological faith? The philosophers replied by a distinction between what they called philosophical and theological truth. Theological truth, they made it clear, is in their real opinion only a kind of utility. The philosopher can live a life of disinterested virtue, but the mass of mankind cannot. The different theological "legislations," Jewish, Christian, or Mohammedan, as the case may be, were intended for those who need the motives of reward and punishment, each being good in the State where it is professed. The authorities are quite right in not permitting it to be publicly questioned; but the learned ought to be free to hold their own theories among themselves.

Averroes, or Ibn Roshd (1126–1198), who has given his name to the whole movement, was taken as its representative because he came last, not because he was its founder or its most original thinker. By him the position just stated was put in particularly strong terms; but it did not avail to save him from persecution. Renan, in discussing the question whether the Arabian doctors were sincere believers in the faith they professed theologically, assumes his ironic tone; but about the general freethinking tendency of Averroes, not limited to metaphysics, there can be no doubt. This can be best seen in the points which Renan gives from his paraphrase of the *Republic*, where a liberality of spirit extending to practical matters is most apparent. Defending the equality of position assigned to women, Averroes does not simply reproduce but develops Plato. Sometimes, he says, they surpass men, as in music; where the perfection of the art would be that the music should be composed by a man and executed by a woman. It is the servitude to which they are reduced by our social order (in Mohammedan Spain) that does not allow us to see what they are capable of. The worst of tyrannies, he goes on to say, is that of priests. Military fiefs, he had said already, are the scourge of States. The Omeyyad autocracy he holds to have been a corruption of the original republic of the Arabians, which, he adds more romantically than historically, exactly resembled the republic of Plato.[1]

[1] *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, pp. 161–162.

Through contact with the Arabian schools, especially during the time of the Crusades from the eleventh century onward, Western Christendom first obtained a fuller knowledge of the sources of Greek philosophy. During the period now called distinctively the Dark Ages—that is, from the fifth to the eighth or tenth century—the knowledge even of Latin antiquity had been reduced to little more than the small selection of school-books necessary for the elements of a learned education. There was, indeed, just enough in the form of compilations on logic to set thought going when minds again awoke after the time of chaos; but, till the theological reaction had suppressed its native philosophers and their books, Islam remained in advance of Christendom. At length, in the twelfth century, Latin translations from the Arabian translations used by the Mohammedan learned class brought to the Christian Middle Ages a knowledge of the works of Aristotle dealing with the content, and not merely with the form, of thought. In the labour of translation the Jews took a considerable part, so that the process of transmission from idiom to idiom had sometimes to pass also through Hebrew. That the thinkers, whether using Arabic, Hebrew, or Latin, could make anything at all of versions thus produced, always on the mediæval system of word-for-word rendering, has been a matter of astonishment. All the time, the original Greek texts were preserved at Constantinople; and, when the movement of Christian Scholasticism

had effectively begun, new versions were made directly from these. For at this time it was exclusively on Latin translations that the thinkers of Europe proceeded: the study of Greek did not begin to be revived till the fourteenth century, and did not become effective till the fifteenth. The fate of the movement was quite unlike that of the Arabian philosophy. The study of Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, at first thought dangerous by the Church and prohibited, was from the thirteenth century made obligatory in the recently founded universities. Orthodox theism was now elaborated on an Aristotelian basis. The theism of Aristotle, it might have been thought *a priori*, was better adapted to form a basis for the simplified theology of Islam; but the explanation of the difference depends on a larger view than that of the particular point of doctrine. To the Arabians the doctrines of Greek philosophy were wholly new, and thus no doubt were a stimulus especially to heterodoxy. Christianity, on the other hand, in its formative period, had already assimilated much of Greek thought; so that the Scholastics, from the point of view of tradition, could busy themselves innocuously with its further development. Philosophy, in the received formula, became the *ancilla theologiæ*. At this stage, indeed, it was the Arabian commentators, more than the heathen masters themselves, that gave the impulse to freethought. To the later Middle Ages Averroes became the typical "infidel."

The unbelief that found more or less disguised utterance in the ages of faith, whether under Islam or Christendom, ran to the most radical denial. There seems to be little record of pure theism as a form of heterodoxy. That was reserved for modern times, when its Græco-Roman expression could be set against the complication with cults and myths in the revealed religions. Yet the heterogeneity of a system made up of theism and spiritualism defended on rational grounds, combined with a particular sacred tradition received on faith, became plain enough in the result. The historians of Scholasticism have shown how no attempted eirenicon of philosophy and faith, however elaborately worked out, could carry with it the general conviction of thinkers. In every case the end was a collapse into scepticism, and the only refuge for the speculative believer was mysticism. Nevertheless it is an error to suppose that the Scholastic philosophy has disappeared. The great system of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) is now the basis of the "Neo-Scholastic" teaching in the Catholic universities; and independent thinkers are ready to allow that this position cannot have been maintained without the presence of something genuinely rational and comprehensive in the system. Scholasticism was, however, always Church-philosophy; and with the new reversal of the European type from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, by which it became again civic instead of theocratic, philosophy passed into a new phase. This sprang

out of a movement that found its inspiration at once in the new growth of physical science and in the direct return to Greek antiquity.

For modern Europe the inestimable value of the Roman Empire of the East has consisted in its preservation of the Greek language and of the texts of the classical writers in their original form. Had these not been preserved, the substitution for it of the Turkish Empire at an earlier period would have been unimportant. Indeed, Comte, though not always fortunate in his prophecies, seems to have been well inspired when he saw in Islamic Turkey greater possibilities of progress than in Eastern Christianity. Incarnate in "Holy Russia," this is simply "part of the darkness that brought forth the light." [1] If the ambitions of the "spiritual power" in the West could have been realised, doubtless the result would have been no better ; but the division between spiritual and temporal has, in the actual circumstances, made Latin Catholicism relatively progressive. At the time with which we are now concerned, Popes and Cardinals themselves became for a moment the representatives of its progressive elements, showing especial eagerness in encouraging the Greek scholars dispersed over Europe before and after the fall of Constantinople, as they had been foremost in seeking to recover the Latin manuscripts buried in the monasteries of the West. Some think that at Constantinople all along there had been a secret tradition of

[1] Ein Theil der Finsterniss die sich das Licht gebar.

disbelief in Christianity ; and Gibbon has reproduced the story that at the Synod of Florence in 1438 one of those scholars said in familiar conversation to another "that in a short time mankind would unanimously renounce the Gospel and the Koran for a religion similar to that of the Gentiles."[1] The actual process, however, by which European humanity found its way out of the middle period was much more complex and troubled.

Protestantism, far from being in the direct way a return to classical antiquity, was rather a return to the Gospel in the spirit of the Koran. Luther was a new example of the prophet as man of action. His aim, not unlike that of Mohammed, if we allow for the difference of time and country, may be described as revival of the Semitic basis of the Gospel so far as that could be cleared of its Hellenic superstructure. From this effort in itself Humanism had nothing to gain ; though its own critical work, in dissolving a heavy accumulation of ecclesiastical fictions and forgeries, had been of immense service to the preachers of return simply to the New Testament. Indirectly, however, the gain was great ; for the definitive schism of the West preserved the new science and learning from serious risk of being overwhelmed by an unbroken Catholic Church wielded by the next generation of fanatics. The life of national States could

[1] *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, lxvi., ed. Bury, vol .vii., p. 130, *n*. *Cf*. Salomon Reinach, *Cultes, Mythes et Religions*, vol. i. (2nd ed., 1908), "Le Christianisme à Byzance et la Question du Philopatris," p. 391.

now go on with the clerical power on the whole subordinated in Catholic as in Protestant countries. All the religions, in the complication of other interests, became henceforth essentially sects. Theocracy, though still militant,

> if all it can will serve
> That little which is left so to defend,

has ceased in Western Europe to be more than a name.

## CHAPTER X

### THE NEW ERA

WHAT then, as regards religion, is the issue of the modern period, at which we have now arrived? Has any spontaneous agreement substituted itself for the compulsion exercised by the powers that claimed to represent God on earth? Or is any such agreement in sight?

One widespread doctrine certainly has appeared aiming at rational agreement based on philosophical principles, and yet not appealing solely to professional philosophers. This description, I think, applies to the position of the Deists from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Varying to some extent in their views on ultimate questions, they agreed in taking for an approximation to the truth the pure theism that might be abstracted from the religions claiming to be revealed, or might be more directly found in writers like Cicero. This they regarded as a universal and rational religion; and, partly from the *a priori* ethical ground furnished by it, and partly from historical arguments of a more empirical kind, they tried to discredit the details of the positive creeds. If we could suppose their general doctrine to have triumphed over historical Christi-

anity, the result would have been the substitution of a philosophy for all that has hitherto been called religion. It would undoubtedly have been a philosophy with some affinities to the higher religions; but it would have meant ultimately the disappearance of all cult that is not internal, and of all serious belief in traditional stories as an element in a religious creed. And, for the first time since the revival of the "liberty of philosophising," it would have been a philosophy not really requiring the distinction of esoteric and exoteric in any form, however the Deists themselves may have had to disguise their opinions about traditional religion in a time of still imperfect freedom.

Something colourless and attenuated in the religious philosophy of this time, which resembles its rather thin classicism in art, ought not to conceal from us the historical importance of the reappearance of Græco-Roman theism as a common standing-ground against superstition. It was, as Comte saw in spite of his distaste for the creed of the Deists, the final phase of that monotheism which had become the fundamental religion of the West with only provincial differences. In the view here taken, this was also the primordial phase: the common starting-point of theistic philosophies and of the constructed religions called revealed. There is this amount of truth in the contentions of the Deists themselves, beginning with Lord Herbert of Cherbury. If ethical theism is not, as they said, the natural

religion of all mankind, it is at least a natural mode of thought when a certain degree of intellectual culture has been attained ; and to a large extent it is the underlying and more genuine belief of those who nominally accept the traditional creeds. Apologists for those creeds on the one side, and Agnostics on the other, have had a controversial interest in representing it as a mere residue of Judæo-Christianity ; and I must admit that I have occasionally myself slipped into this view too easily. I was partly set right by Renouvier, who affirmed irrefragably that all the elements of his own theism were to be found in ancient philosophy ; but I cannot say that I grasped the bearings of this all at once. Indeed, it is only recently that I have found what seems to me the solution, by which the agreement of type is explained. I think I have given the outlines of a rational demonstration ; but in order to leave nothing obscure as regards the way in which I arrived at the idea, I will add that it first took distinct form when I was reading, without special purpose, the fragments of Xenophanes, including the elegies, as given in the collection of Diels. It then struck me that the forcible yet unsystematic expression of the monotheistic idea by a wandering learner and teacher, who was yet not in the full sense a philosopher like Parmenides, would be intelligible if we could suppose it to have been taken up by him, firmly grasped, and transmitted with something of the character that we call philosophic, but not to have been from the very

beginning an original conception of his own. What then was the primal source ? It seemed discoverable if we could allow one grain of truth, beyond what is now universally admitted regarding Greek science, in the mass of assertions so often made, and mostly with so little evidence, about the Oriental sources of Greek philosophy.

As I have remarked already, the ultimate doctrines of those who can be called in a general sense theists have been various. The Greek theism, as in the case of Xenophanes himself, is usually tinged with what we call pantheism. And, as we saw, some of those who have put forward theism ostensibly, have had their reserves as to what is now called the personality of God. This might be shown, not only from writers touched by mysticism, but from Cicero, who is not in the least a mystic.[1] It is still more conspicuous in many among the doctors of the revealed religions, who, when they reach a certain degree of profundity, almost inevitably become pantheists. Thus an adherent, like Renouvier, of a very clearly defined personal theism regards the "absolutist" and "infinitist" theologians as representatives, on that side, of the view opposed to his own.

The general result, however, is that theism, with a tendency to pass into pantheism, can really

1 Near the end of the *De Divinatione* the content of Cicero's theism is reduced to something that Hume's scepticism would leave untouched : "Esse præstantem aliquam æternamque naturam, et eam suspiciendam admirandamque hominum generi pulchritudo mundi ordoque rerum cælestium cogit confiteri" (ii. 72, 148).

claim a pretty wide consensus. And its earliest and latest phases prove it to be quite detachable from the revealed religions. It is not a residue of these, but, if I am right, the idea under which they were formed, disentangled at length from a factitious union. It had its origin in rational reflection ; and, in its detached form, even apart from pantheistic developments, it has the characters of a philosophy. The non-theistic philosophies, I think it must be confessed, are those of minorities of dissentients, the dissentients themselves being often sceptics and not absolute deniers.

I do not argue from this that theism is true : on what most will think fundamental points I have to class myself as a dissentient. I only contend that it is an error in opponents of the popular religions to throw all their force into an attack upon what these have assumed as their foundation, for which there is really a wide consensus, and almost to allow the logical claim of the superstructure to remain unassailed if the foundation is left. Of course the questions between theism, atheism, and pantheism (to use broad rather than strictly defined terms) will long have to be discussed in the schools ; but, the claims to miraculous tradition being set aside, these all seem to be questions on the rational plane. In no time that can be foreseen, if philosophical liberty is preserved, are they likely to be settled by the spontaneous and universal agreement of thinkers. And in no other way can we

desire that they should be settled. To suppress subtleties by a compromise in the interests of social discipline would be worthy only of a new Church, and not of a State ordered with a view to the free expansion of the human spirit. No such agreement about topics of the schools is needed in a social or political interest; and, as Spinoza, who proved this, has also said, the multitude would laugh at, rather than venerate, a priesthood or popedom of philosophers.[1] But, this being so, it is well not to complicate practical questions by dragging into them topics of the schools. To consent that ecclesiastical Christianity shall stand till mechanical Atheism has prevailed would be to play into the hands of reactionaries. And the error is one of logic, not merely of tactics; for in fact the two are not the sole logical alternatives.

The practical conclusion into which I have digressed for a moment is not new; and it would certainly not have been worth while to write the present book merely for the sake of drawing it. In fact, though it seemed well to bring it out explicitly by way of supporting what others have said, my present thesis, so far as I understand my own aim, is scientifically disinterested. If true, it has an important bearing on the history of religions; and I have developed it to the best of my ability. But, as I promised before, in order

[1] *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, vii. 79: "Nova . . . ecclesiæ auctoritas novumque sacerdotum vel pontificum genus, quod vulgus magis irrideret quam veneraretur."

to put the reader in full possession of the means of judging, I will go on briefly to discuss the merits of the rational as distinguished from the historical question, and set forth in outline my metaphysical view. Thus any bias that may exist can be allowed for.

First, then, I do not accept the theism of Renouvier, which asserts the existence of a personal creative God who at a definite time set going the series of phenomena.[1] The holding of this form of theism by a philosopher may, it seems to me, result either from an extreme preoccupation with ethics, causing a relative indifference to pure speculation, or from a passion for clearly defined imaginative forms, an intolerance of anything of the nature of mystery even at the limit. Now Renouvier was both strongly preoccupied, though perhaps not to excess, with the practical side of philosophy, and a mathematician by training. His logical rigour, with insistence on clear outline, has an impressiveness which I have felt. On the other hand, a creationist doctrine tends inevitably to an imaginative embodiment which is apt to become mythological. This was revealed in the

[1] Though Renouvier's philosophical starting-point was Kantian, his creationist doctrine was not that of Kant, whose real position is in essence Neo-Platonic. "Creation" for Kant, as for Plotinus, does not mean the causal beginning of a phenomenal series, but is a name for a relation of noumena out of time. See *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Part i., Bk. i., Sect. 3, pp. 123–124 (ed. Kehrbach), where the position is very distinctly put. When Plotinus says that the One "creates," he means that it is the eternal ground of particular realities. Kant, in his own technical language, says the same thing. With Kant, too, as with the Neo-Platonists, occasional ambiguity arises from application of the word "cause" to noumena.

work entitled *Le Personnalisme* (1903), dating from the last year of the philosopher's life.

Taking the creationist doctrine seriously, he set out to imagine, in a form consistent with science, a history of the universe leading to the existing social state on earth. The imagination is that, before the nebula out of which the present world emerged, there was a creation of living beings, endowed with free-will, in an order of equality and justice. Through the egoistic ambition of some, this passed into a hierarchical order governed by tyrants like the Jupiter of Shelley. Then came rebellion ; and such were the powers over Nature possessed by the beings in this first creation that there was a wreck of the world, such as would have been the end in the *Prometheus Unbound* if Jupiter in his fall could actually have confused the elements. In our world, which has emerged from the nebula resulting from the wreck, the spiritual existences of the former state, being immortal, return to a renewed life, with the possibility that in the end a better order may come to be. This, in Renouvier's view, is always only a possibility. And the possibility is not merely hypothetical, but absolute ; for knowledge in God himself is limited by a real free-will of creatures. In the meantime, the human race seems to have sprung, as in one of the myths of ancient Orphism, from the ashes of the Titans.

If this had been put forth as an imagination like that of Plato in the *Politicus*, it would have been interesting and stimulating ; but I am afraid

it was meant to be taken more literally. Coming from the rigorous logician of creative theism, it destroys all the sobriety that this might seem to have as against evolutionist cosmogonies whether ancient or modern. And a creationist doctrine must take some such form. It is in the very nature of the theory that it cannot be content with the concept.

Though it does not perhaps strictly follow from rejection of the creative beginning of phenomena, I think the recognition here implied, that the reality, beyond a certain point, must be to us unimaginable will lead to the rejection of personality as its attribute. The question then remains, Is there still any meaning for philosophy in speaking of God? Ought we to choose some other name for the ultimate reality, if it is not personal?

This, it seems to me, depends finally on the view we take concerning the system of the universe as a perfect or imperfect manifestation of reality. For some forms of doctrine that can be called in general terms pantheistic there is a meaning in saying that the reality is God. For other forms this is doubtful. It is doubtful, many have thought, in the case of Spinoza's pantheism. There is indeed a mystical consummation; knowledge of the necessary order of the universe is accompanied by an emotion which Spinoza calls the "intellectual love of God"; but there is no moral order of the world beyond that which is introduced into it by human society. This last, I am inclined to think, is the decisive point.

Even in a purely idealistic system, for which the ultimate reality is mind, or something beyond mind, if justice does not rule, there is no God worthy of the name. Or perhaps, as Euripides puts it, an ultimate order of things that is unjust would be mindless.[1] Euripides was not so great a poet as the author of the Book of Job; but he was a Greek, and could say this explicitly.

Now the consensus for a moral order of the world is, when we come to consider it, wider than for the personality of God. For it extends not only over Europe and Western Asia, but also over the remoter East. And it runs through not only the popular modes of thought but the philosophies, including those that are called technically "atheistic," in the sense that they reduce the world to a collection of individuals and deny any unitary reality of the whole even in the form of an impersonal Absolute. That the moral order is supposed to be realised, not in a rigorously circumscribed "future state," as in the dominant Western religions, but in a series of lives, does not alter the character of the general conception. Of course there are always dissentients. And, as I said before, I do not take the consensus to prove the case. Still, so general a view, held both by thinkers and by whole races without coercion from political power, gives the

ἀρετῇ σε νικῶ θνητὸς ὢν θεόν μέγαν·
ἀμαθής τις εἶ θεός, εἰ δίκαιος οὐκ ἔφυς.
*Her. Fur.* 342, 347.

doctrine a claim to careful examination on its philosophical merits.

If in any form the belief in a moral order of the universe is to be defended, one concession must be made from the first. The actual world taken as it appears, with lives in it supposed really beginning and ending when they seem to begin and end, is not a manifestation of absolute justice. The moral sense of man brought into relation with the facts has been found sufficient to decide this when the pious prepossessions encouraged by unspeculative religion are dismissed. This means that if there is finally, or in the long run, a complete moral order of the world, the existence which, on the principles of idealism, is the ultimate reality must be only partially manifested in the visible universe. It must be not only "immanent" but also "transcendent"; not in the sense that it is an interfering power such as is assumed in the popular religions or in some kinds of mechanical Deism, but in the sense that there are manifestations beyond those known to us. The kind of law asserted by the Indian religious philosophies, according to which a sum of guilt or merit is carried over from one life to another, would fulfil the condition; but I only give this as an illustration. I desire to remain in the region of concepts, and to avoid tying down the idea to any particular mode in which it might be realised. Now it may be said in favour of this assumption of a transcendent reality having other manifestations, first,

that a pure phenomenism which tries to get rid of all metaphysics is in the end incoherent; next, that the world is not intelligible metaphysically without the aid of hypotheses; and, finally, that there seems to be in us a demand that, while the ultimate reality is more than a moral order, it shall include that. Against this reasoning Hume's well-known objection is not conclusive. He argues that we have no right to infer in the cause—that is, in God—more of moral perfection than is discoverable in the effect—that is, in the world. But to speak of God and the world as cause and effect belongs only to the hypothesis of creation, which has been set aside. If we call the metaphysical reality God, then the world of phenomena is a perpetual manifestation, not an effect produced at a certain point of time by a First Cause. And the manifestation is known to be incomplete from the incoherence it presents to logical intellect, without the use of any ethical or æsthetic tests whatever. The concepts, by which physical science in part remedies this incoherence, themselves fail to arrive at harmony in a total system. Thus on metaphysical grounds we are entitled to recur, if this will help us, to the concept of a supreme ideal. But why, it may be said, think that the moral order, if fully known, would be better than that which we know? An order of justice can be seen to exist up to a certain point, but it is imperfect. Why suppose the imperfection corrected in some unknown way? Is there more in this than simply, as Hume puts

it, the desire which always exists for something a little more or better than has been experienced, whatever that may be ? Now here again I have to concede a point to Renouvier, of which I did not always adequately see the necessity. We cannot finally, I think, escape the admission that there is in the human mind a demand, in the case of certain ethical norms, that they should be realised absolutely, neither more nor less. First of all, the demand applies to ourselves ; but, as we are demonstrably, from the resemblance of our different phenomenal worlds (out of which we make one for science by abstraction), microcosms, representing each in its manner the whole, we are led to infer, in the directing principle of this, something corresponding to the norms imperfectly realised by us. If in the system of things as a whole they are absolutely realised, this answers the inexpugnable demand made by them ; and to say that they are thus realised is mere words unless the manifestation is prolonged beyond what is visible. This means that the visible universe, though never at any moment a complete manifestation of Mind or Reality, points to series of experiences in which the manifestation, if grasped as a whole, would answer our ideal demands. If this is so, then the name of God, as conceived by the theistic philosophies and by the higher religions when cleared of their superstitions, is nearer to the ultimate meaning of things than objective and indifferent Nature as conceived by science.

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In the process by which thought tends to this result I do not see any actual fallacy; provided we do not pass from the formation of an ideal to the suppression of facts in the interests of our postulates. As against any other kind of faith, intellectual good faith must be preserved. If any one had already achieved a completely harmonious system in which the reality of the whole presented itself as uniting logical non-contradiction with perfect beauty and goodness, there would be no more to say. We should have a scientific system of metaphysics. A process ending in this, and not in mere aspiration, would translate itself into intuitive conviction. Such conviction some thinkers in the past have thought must necessarily be produced in all minds willing to give to their demonstrations the requisite effort of attention. At present we are again rather in the position of Xenophanes, who said that even if a man should chance to say the complete truth, he himself does not know it:

εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τύχοι τετελεσμένον εἰπών,
αὐτὸς ὅμως οὐκ οἶδε· δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται.

Or, in the theological language chosen by John Scotus Erigena in speaking of the ultimate reality itself: *Sicut tenebræ ejus, ita et lumen ejus.*

This final confession that a constructive metaphysic can at present be only a possibility or an aspiration, and not an achieved result, must not of course be taken as involving the scientific part of the present work in corresponding uncertainty.

That does not depend on the metaphysical theorising, into which I have only entered to avoid the implication that I suppose myself all along to be dealing with nothing but illusions and errors. What I regard as such I have made sufficiently clear. Combined with these sometimes, and sometimes detached from them, there have nevertheless been genuinely rational speculations of religious thinkers. Whether we accept these or reject them, or regard them with doubt or reserve, or treat them as provisional solutions to be considered in the light of fuller knowledge, we are bound to give them a place apart from the elements of religion that can be adequately dealt with by anthropological or even by historical criticism. And, if we take the ultimate speculations of the highest minds for a period of between two and three thousand years, there is probably not one that does not still offer some point of actual suggestion for present thought.

# APPENDIX

## NOTE TO CHAPTER VI

SINCE finishing this book (except for the insertions mentioned in the Preface) I met incidentally with a reference to the *De Legibus Hebræorum* of the Rev. John Spencer, D.D., Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, which led me to think that I might find in it some anticipation of the view whereby I have made an attempt to synthesise the most radical criticism of the Old Testament. The work—a huge Latin folio—first appeared in 1685. Though written by a doctor of the Restoration, with the purpose of buttressing the Anglican position, it was immediately found dangerous by the orthodox, and became the object of many "refutations." The importance of its researches has since been recognised by the higher critics. In particular Robertson Smith, in the preface to his *Religion of the Semites* (1st ed., 1889), which itself will probably come to be regarded as the true starting-point of a revolution in the anthropological theory of sacrifice, has generously expressed his obligations to it. Spencer, he says, "was so much before his time that his work was not followed up; it is often ignored by professed students of the Old Testa-

ment, and has hardly exercised any influence on the current ideas which are the common property of educated men interested in the Bible." And, as far as I am able to judge from looking into portions to catch the general drift, its value is inadequately estimated when it is treated as merely preparatory to the work of critics dominated by later ideas of historical evolution. It might yet serve to counteract the exclusive and dogmatic faith in " gradual growth " which disciples of the more famous Spencer of the nineteenth century—quite in contradiction to his own mental habits—are apt to think sufficiently supported by the authority of his name.

The ecclesiastical position of the seventeenth-century theologian, in which he follows Hooker, is that particular historic branches of the Christian Church are entitled, within certain limits, to construct forms of discipline and ceremonial for themselves. The Presbyterian model set up by the Puritans is therefore not of divine authority. The Church of England may lawfully appoint, as forms to be observed, rites in themselves indifferent. For this position he seeks support in the ancient Hebrew legislation. The divine lawgiver, he holds, while giving his " chosen people " commands definitely intended to rid them of polytheism and idolatry, at the same time sanctioned the religious use of symbolic imagery and practices originally " heathen." This (like the " popery " which some objected to in the Church of England) was an indulgence to the weaknesses

through which the mass of mankind cannot without aids and concessions be brought to acceptance of a pure and imageless monotheism as the final expression of religious truth. The religion of the Jews itself did not conform to the standard set up by the Puritans, but was in its disciplinary and ceremonial part a kind of selection with expurgation of heathen rites, of which the origins are to be sought especially in Babylonia and Egypt.

On the whole this seems to me, when the dates and some of the modes of formulation are changed, a truer account than that which makes the religion primarily an evolution within a small tribe, arising in the ethical spirit of its own prophets, and going back for ultimate source either to the "monotheistic instinct of the Semitic race" or to the "genius of Israel for righteousness." Substitute the priestly corporation of the Persian period for the "divine legislator" of the date traditionally assigned to the Mosaic Code, and we are at the historical origin. And this origin is in a manner catastrophic, and not the culmination of gradual growth within a particular tribe or group of tribes. We are at one of the great moments of revolutionary change. The "pre-history" of this moment for higher theology, whatever may be the case with rites, is in Egypt and Babylonia, not in Israel. What made Israel—or, rather, Jerusalem—fit to receive the innovating idea was, as M. Dujardin has shown, no peculiar ethical genius, but intense desire for the preservation (and

extension) of a nationality. In its priestly leaders were found men of sufficient insight to adopt the speculative monotheism that was the final result attained by their predecessors of the older polytheistic civilisations, and to organise a national cult by means of the identification of the tribal "god of Israel" with the God of the universe. The hierarchs of Jerusalem were the systematising minds of the religion, which based its intolerant fanaticism ultimately on this identification. The prophets were its later poetic voices. As regards development, ethical and other, the first literary impression from reading the Bible is nearest the truth. Isaiah does not come before Moses, nor even before the stories of *Samuel* and *Kings*. The Prophets and Psalmists refine on a basis given them in the tangible form of legal code and sacred history. This last (apart from its late ecclesiastical ossification, represented especially in the Books of Chronicles) was not derivative, but relatively primary.

In all this (which I have put at greater length in the course of the book) there is no inconsistency with rational evolutionism. It could be admitted by a writer who lays all possible stress on the doctrine of continuity.[1] With this it is quite consistent that the evolution of the human race should have its moments of crisis. From a period that can be definitely fixed, it may be said that

1 I find it perfectly compatible with what is established in the excellent work of Dr. Alfred Vierkandt, *Die Stetigkeit im Kulturwandel* (1908), which has influenced some turns of expression above.

Humanity reached a higher degree of self-consciousness. The sixth century B.C. is the period at once of the great teachers of Chinese and Indian tradition and of the earliest Greek philosophers. From that time onward, systems deliberately thought out by individual minds, or groups of minds, in part supersede those processes of social growth in which consciousness is only of detailed modifications and not of a systematic plan. The whole period of the European "revolutionary transition," indeed, goes further back. When we have traced it to its first beginnings—seen to be such in the light of after-knowledge—it becomes the "three thousand years" of Shelley and Comte. The early part of this period, however, had not yet reached for itself the consciousness of something new; and when self-consciousness comes in, it affects not only the distinctively progressive —the Hellenic and Humanist—movement, but the more or less reactionary returns to the past. The systems of "revealed religion," all later than the origins of philosophy, were partly adaptations of rationalised theism, and partly reinforcements of old authority by fusions of this high theology with mysterious ritual and myth. And as much as philosophy they were expressions of what the Hegelians call "self-conscious spirit." Undoubtedly there is sub-conscious growth behind them—a long "pre-history"; but Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism are all doctrines worked out from the first by minds with a certain view of the whole. This character they share

not only with philosophy, but with the political types of the Greek and the Roman world later than the heroic monarchies. The description applies equally to aristocracy and democracy as historically worked out, and to the "new monarchy" of which Julius Cæsar remains the supreme representative. The "Roman Revolution," through which it came that "the Orontes flowed into the Tiber," had at least as much in it of self-conscious direction as the French Revolution, which meant that the forward wave of the world had regained its force. And to know that such phenomena still exist, we have only to look around us—for example, at events in Japan, or in Turkey, or (more recent and nearer to ourselves) in Portugal. An evolutionism that denies the reality or permanent effect of all changes in human affairs except those that take place gradually and through unconscious or subconscious processes is merely a new form of arbitrary dogma. That much movement, progressive or not, still goes on in this way we know; but the method of leaving it to itself is neither the ideal method nor the method that has been found solely practicable.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER VII (A)

In reading lately some of the dramas of Seneca, I could not help noticing indications of the feelings with which the governing classes in the first century of the Roman Empire regarded the

imperial monarchy. And Seneca, of course, knew the monarchy at particularly close quarters. The dramas, his latest editors conclude, were not made public during his lifetime, but only after his death from manuscripts found among his papers. That they were literary exercises, not written either for acting or with any serious attempt at characterisation, makes them all the more interesting for their unmistakable revelation of the intense underlying hate and fear inspired by the Cæsarean autocracy. How the inarticulate masses felt we can scarcely know ; but we perceive the temper (not entirely undemocratic) of the class of officials who, having formerly ruled by arrangements with their fellow nobles and an occasional " new man " of ability, under the popular sanction of elections, now held their lives and all that they possessed at the discretion of a master. Through the personages of the drama as mouthpieces, the feelings associated with the new imperial despotism are transferred to the kingships of the heroic age.

For princes there is no need of evil counsellors : a kingdom will of itself teach fraud and crime.

> Atr. Ut nemo doceat fraudis et sceleris vias :
> Regnum docebit. *Thy.* 312.

If a nature shows signs of cruelty before attaining the sceptre, what will it become after ?

> Ioc. Tam ferus durum geris
> Sævumque in iras pectus et nondum imperas :
> Quid sceptra facient ?
> *Phæn. Fragm.* 220–222.
> [*Theb.* 582–584.]

To a king there is no sense of dominance in ruling over willing subjects : the God who formed the world established hate and kingship at the same moment.

ETE. Regnare non vult esse qui invisus timet.
Simul ista mundi conditor posuit deus
Odium atque regnum.
* * * * *
Qui vult amari languida regnat manu.
*Ib.* 292–297 [654–659].

Even so small a liberty as silence cannot be permitted by a king.

CR. Tacere liceat. Ulla libertas minor
A rege petitur ?
ŒD. Sæpe vel lingua magis
Regi atque regno muta libertas obest.
*Œd.* 536–538.

Kings are accustomed to treat suspicions as certainties. Fear is the guardian of kingdoms.

CR. Quid si innocens sum ?
ŒD. Dubia pro certis solent
Timere reges.
* * * * *
CR. Sic odia fiunt.
ŒD. Odia qui nimium timet
Regnare nescit. Regna custodit metus.
*Ib.* 712–717.

The consummate tyrant does not make death his worst penalty. That must rather be an object of desire to his victims.—The *Thyestes* is in great part a development of this ; and compare *Hercules Furens*, 515–517 :

LYC. Qui morte cunctos luere supplicium iubet
Nescit tyrannus esse. . . .
Miserum veta perire, felicem iube.

Yet the crimes of rulers are punished—and heavily—by the mere possession of the kingly power.

> Pol. Sceleris et fraudis suæ
> Pænas nefandus frater ut nullas ferat ?
> Ioc. Ne metue : pænas, et quidem solvet graves :
> Regnabit. Est hæc pæna.
>
> *Phæn. Fragm.* 281–284.
> [*Theb.* 643–646.]

For all that, the aspirant to monarchy holds everything—country, kindred, wife—as nothing in comparison with it.

> Pol. Pro regno velim
> Patriam penates coniugem flammis dare.
> Imperia pretio quolibet constant bene.
>
> *Ib.* 300–302 [662–664].

Then, by reaction, we get the " supra-morality," as Renouvier called it, of the ascetic, opposed to the " anti-morality " of the despot. This is what Dr. F. W. Bussell, in his recent work, *Marcus Aurelius and the Later Stoics* (1910), has called the " Buddhistic " element in Stoicism. A typical expression of it is put into the mouth of Antigone, dissuading Œdipus from suicide, on the ground that the end has been attained already by absolute renunciation.

> Qui fata proculcavit ac vitæ bona
> Proiecit atque abscidit et casus suos
> Oneravit ipse, *cui deo nullo est opus,*
> Quare ille mortem cupiat, aut quare petat ?
>
> *Œd. Fragm.* [*Theb.*] 193–196.

By the words italicised, the morality becomes almost explicitly atheistic. They would have pleased Schopenhauer, though I do not think he

has quoted them.[1] And yet Seneca is formally an optimistic theist ; for there is no doubt about the identity of the tragedian with the philosopher.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER VII (B)

THE investigations of W. B. Smith (*Der vorchristliche Jesus*, 1906) result in the conclusion that "Christ" and "Jesus" were both divine names before the Christian era. To bring them together as names for a single being who had lived on earth was first achieved by the movement that passed into historical Christianity. In the origin of this, the essential process was substitution of the assertion "One has come" for "One is to come." Precisely how this substitution was effected the author does not undertake to show ; but he seems to take it for granted that the explanation must in the end be in terms of a slow and gradual evolution. (See the closing pages of his chapter entitled "Anastasis.") So far as the detailed transition is concerned, we may agree that no certainty is yet attainable. Perhaps, indeed, certainty can never be attained where the factors are so complex and elusive. I think, however, we can carry understanding a step further by taking into account a catastrophic element, not merely hypothetical, but

1 In *Parerga und Paralipomena*, ii. § 116, he cites, to convey the meaning, Sophocles, *Ajax*, 567–569 ; but in these lines the hero's expression of the intention to do without the gods is not doctrinal, but dramatic, and is treated as the first beginning of his ills ; so that the passage from Seneca would have been more appropriate.

historically known. My own suggestion (made in *The Origins of Christianity*, 1st ed., 1904) was that the occasion of the transition is to be found in the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. Before that crisis of Judaism the only "Christians" were Messianists; after it, there came to be Christians in the sense which the name has borne ever since. The assertion that the true Christ had already come and been rejected was made under the stress of that shock; and on this hint the story grew from pre-existent elements of myth and legend. Doubtless many Messianic pretenders had been executed by Pontius Pilate; therefore the event was placed in the time of that severe governor a generation earlier. In any case, Professor Smith seems to me to give exactly the true account when he treats the apocalyptic passages in the Gospels, predicting the end of the world (more or less confused in the redactions with the destruction of Jerusalem), as vestiges left over by the earlier Messianic movement and incorporated by the new Christianity that was continuous with it. Misunderstanding of these passages (readily perceived in the centos of our canonical Gospels and Epistles) he thinks was the source of ideas about a "second coming." The essential message of the transformed Messianism or new Christianity was that the Christ or Messiah had already appeared in the form of Jesus. The "second coming" was a means of comprehending in the new scheme what had at first been the future (and only)

coming of a divine being—Son of God and Son of Man—now said to have come. Since the revelation of this divinity was supposed to have been made in the earthly life, sufferings and death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus, the old apocalyptic hope (irreconcilable with the type given in the Gospel to the manifestation of the Saviour-god) had to be postponed to a more remote and indefinite future.

In the reign of Nero (to restate my own hypothesis) the proclaimers of the end of the world by fire as a preliminary to the reign of the Messiah or supernatural Χριστός were actually the only "Christians." No one yet said that the Christ had come. In the reign of Trajan the Christians known to Tacitus believed in a Christ who had already come down to earth, and had brought into the world a new revelation that was to inherit and supersede the claims of Judaism. Jerusalem had been destroyed (so the Christian Fathers afterwards said) for rejecting him. The continuity between the earlier and the later groups is no doubt illustrated by the incorporation of the diary known as the "we-narrative" in the Acts of the Apostles. The "Paul" of that document was a member (or perhaps, as Professor Smith thinks, only an associate) of a little group of Messianic propagandists. Afterwards he became the hero and the ideal Apostle of certain groups by whom, among the newer Christians, the doctrine concerning the supernatural Redeemer at last revealed in the flesh

was most elaborately wrought out and "spiritually" sublimated.

On the diary in Acts, I am glad to find myself in agreement with Schmiedel, as well as with Van Manen. The extremest scepticism, I think, will have finally to admit a contemporary basis to this, as to the memoirs of Nehemiah worked up into the book of that name. In neither case, unfortunately, does the narrative as redacted furnish us with the means of deciding between rival theories. So far as I can see, the admission of an authentic basis is equally compatible with the most traditionalist and the most radical attempts at constructive understanding of the actual events underlying the origins of the old and the new theocracy. Thus, whether we like it or not, we are thrown back on an effort to think the process out from the very scanty data that can in any way be brought into relation with real history.

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